

THE MYSTICISM OF JACOB BOEHME WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO HIS DIALECTIC

A Thesis
Presented To
The Faculty of New College
University of Edinburgh

In Partial Fulfilment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
John Joseph Stoudt



(Copy)

U N I V E R S I T Y O F E D I N B U R G H

8 December 1938

Dear Sir:--

I have to inform you that the Senatus, on the 7th of December, admitted you as a student under the Ph.D. Ordinance, the subject of your study to be 'The Mysticism of Jacob Boehme with special reference to his conception of the Kingdom of God', the work to be carried on under the supervision of Professors Baillie and Watt, and the period of study to extend over two years from 1st October, 1938.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) W.A. Fleming,

Secretary of the
University

Note-- With the permission of the Secretary of the Ph.D. Committee the special emphasis was changed to read: 'with special reference to his dialectic'.

To
Father and Mother

FOREWORD

I chose to write on Jacob Boehme to justify my grandfather's use of his leisure. After finding his battered copy of Der Weg zu Christo the question arose in my mind: why should a Pennsylvania farmer, born in the German Reformed Church and teetted on the Heidelberg Catechism, have read this old Silesian Schwärmer of the Seventeenth Century? Why should he have invited heresy? I found myself driven more and more to writing this work. I hope that my answer is clear and convincing, that my grandfather's use of his leisure is justified.

This, then, has been a labour of love: but not only a labour of love, for anyone who begins to work on Jacob Boehme with the simple idea that he will emerge from the work the same being who began it is mistaken. To write on Jacob Boehme is catastrophic! No self-contained, self-satisfied soul should attempt it. Coming to grips with Jacob Boehme, meeting him face to face, encountering his penetrating Blick of spiritual

creativity, is a mind-stretching, soul-intoxicating experience. At times Boehme's spirit was shallow and at other times it was deep even to giddiness, a fertile mixture of genius and prophet. In the end it is better to have come to grips with a first-rate speculative mind -- and Boehme's certainly was first rate -- than to have vanquished a dozen neophytes.

The failures of this work must not be ascribed to Boehme. They are not his responsibility, but mine. Perhaps pride has led me to attempt something which really cannot be done: to make a coherent, logical system out of ~~bsciyly~~ irrational mystical insight. The attempt to make Boehme's insight into a systematic organism may be certain to fail, though no less a churchman than Philip Spener sought someone who would wade through Boehme's strange terminology to discover his real theological system. Boehme's terminology is difficult, but I am convinced, now that I have worked through it, that its difficulties are ~~exaggerated~~, that it is superficial, not an integral part of his thought. Yet, in the end the student of Boehme must perhaps bow down and confess that the shoemaker's vision escaped schematization, that it cannot be made into a coherent, geometrical book, like Spinoza's Ethica simply because Boehme's whole system is nothing more than an attempted rationalization of a poetical metaphor. Jacob Boehme was the poet of inner contemplation. His mind worked with pictures and images. His words, though, were often halting and incoherent.

Boehme belongs to the ages and to all men. He is not

the son of a single race or of one epoch. He was a simple man who won for himself a proper place among the great minds of the ages and his influence has been wide, pervasive, and persistent. He was himself one of the most amazing products of an amazing age.

The pleasurable duty of thanking those kind men and women who have helped in the making of this thesis must begin with respects to my old friend and teacher, Dr Rufus M. Jones. His sympathetic understanding was the incentive which urged me to probe the mysteries of that aspect of religion which has been his chief interest for half a century. He first lighted my Boehme candle. He guided by first steps in the study of the theologia mystica. He has become the continuing source of strength in what has become the chief of my intellectual interests.

To Dr Will-Erich Peuckert, of Haasel in Silesia, I am indebted for kind and tolerant help. We spent some lovely June days together tracing the earthly life of the Görlitz shoemaker. Peuckert's excellent books, especially his beautiful Das Leben Jakob Böhmes, have been invaluable.

Professor Ernst Benz, Church Historian at Marburg -- the University which one of my forbears, as Rector, brought into the Protestant fold -- graciously gave of his time to help in the clarification of several points. His little book -- Der Vollkommene Mensch nach Jakob Böhme -- is more than echoed

in this thesis.

My advisors at Edinburgh, Professors Hugh Watt and John Baillie, aided in structural organization.

To the Schwenkfeldian Historical Library at Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, and to its curators, Dr Elmer Schultz Johnson and the Rev. Mr Lester Kriebel, I am indebted for the use of their rich collection of Silesian materials.

To Dr Alexandre Koyré, formerly of Paris but now happily of New York, I am indebted for his provocative book, La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme.

To the Friends of Pendle Hill, Wallingford, especially Dr Howard H. Brinton, I owe much for their interest in the 'Jacob Beehmen' of our hearts.

To Paul Tillich, of Union Seminary in New York City, I owe my deepest debt of gratitude. He helped me relive Boehme's spirit. He taught me more than I can acknowledge, because the precious insight which Boehme received, and which was communicated to German idealism, was uncovered in my own heart by Tillich's patient leading. In the year that I was privileged to serve as his assistant we tried to justify, if only for my satisfaction, the place that our people hold in the history of philosophical theology. In these days, we of German blood certainly do have much to atone for. Perhaps we may be permitted to point to the philosophicus teutonicus as the solid refutation of that form of racial mysticism which ats like a canker in the German soul. Religion can hardly be built without humility

at its center, and as long as Boehme's humble spirit survives our proud contemporaries may write their evil books. Someday, and that not far distant, Boehme's Lily will blossom in the northern countries, even as he foretold. Then the Anti-Christ will fear it for then he will be revealed as the terrible imposter that he certainly is.

And to my parents I owe all.

Life is good -- yes, even this life of strife and sin. But the Way to Christ -- the life of Christ -- is Truth and Light.

Gottes Brunnlein hat Wasser Die Fülle.

John Joseph Stoudt

Pendle Hill
Wallingford, Pennsylvania
June 12th, 1942

CONTENTS

Foreword	iii.
Contents	viii.
Introduction	xii
BOOK ONE: EMPIRICAL BASES OF BOEHME'S MYSTICISM	
I. Introductory	1
II. Boehme's Life: 1575-1600	18
III. Boehme's Basic Mystical Experience	44
IV. Boehme's Life: 1600-1612	56
V. <u>Aurora</u>	70
VI. Period of Silence	77
VII. Works of the Alchemical Period	115
VIII. Works of the Mystical Period	137
IX. Mature Theological Works	159
X. Boehme as an Apologist	172
XI. Boehme's Life: 1619-1629	176

BOOK TWO: JACOB BOEHME'S MYSTICAL SPECULATION

I. THEOGONY

1. Introductory.	201
2. First Spirit of God: God as Unknown	212
3. Second Spirit of God: God as Will	221
4. Third Spirit of God: God as Logos	230
5. Fourth Spirit of God: God as Spirit	237
6. Fifth Spirit of God: God as Tendency Towards unity	243
7. Sixth Spirit of God: God as Tendency towards diversity	247
8. Seventh Spirit of God: God as Wisdom, as the world of forms	249
9. The Theological Problem	259

II. ETERNAL NATURE

1. Introductory: <u>Spohia</u> and the World of Ideas	264
2. Glance (<u>Blick</u>) of Creativity.	276
3. The Fire World.	279
4. Freedom and Desire: Dialectics	286
5. The Seven Natural Forms: the dialectical life Cycle	298
6. Angels	314
7. The Three Principles: Eternal Modes	318
8. The Dialectical Problem	326

III. CREATION

1. Creation and Lucifer's Fall	332
2. First Day of Creation: Light, Earth	343
3. Second Day of Creation: The Waters	348
4. Third Day of Creation: Paradise	353

5. Fourth Day of Creation: <u>Birth</u> , Sun, Planets	358
6. Fifth Day of Creation: Creatures, Animals	366
7. Sixth Day of Creation: Adam, Man	370
8. Seventh Day of Creation: Sabbath, Day	372
9. The Problem of Creation	376

IV. MAN

1. Sophia and Creation: <u>Imago Dei</u>	381
2. <u>Status Integritatis</u>	387
3. Fall.	398
4. Second Fall and Its Results	406
5. Man's Threefold Life: Body, Soul, and Spirit	417
6. Four Complexions	426
7. The Boundary: Man Between Life and Death.	429
8. The Anthropological Problem	435

V. REDEMPTION

1. Sophia and the Incarnation	459
2. Christ.	445
3. The Work of Christ	453
4. Man's Response to the Work of Christ	462
5. Church and Sacraments	468
6. The New Birth and the New Body	478
7. Total Redemption and Judgment	483

BOOK THREE: NATURE OF BOEHME'S MYSTICISM

I. Mysticism	486
II. Boehme's Mysticism as a Religious Category . . .	522
III. Boehme's mysticism as Holy Speculation	534
IV. Boehme's Mysticism as Methodology	543

APPENDICES:

I. JACOB BOEHME'S WORKS

1. Note on the Collection of the Mss	551
2. German, Latin, English Titles: Abbreviations	559
3. List of Boehme's Epistles	562
4. Notes on Boehme's Tracts	568
5. Works Ascribed to Boehme	575

II. BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS

1. External Sources	577
2. Collation of the Early Lives of Boehme . . .	580

BIBLIOGRAPHIES:

I. Chronological List of the Boehme Editions . . .	589
II. Chronological List of Works About Boehme , . . .	618

INTRODUCTION

I.

Jacob Boehme's was a singularly strange spirit. Untrained in the formal sense and hence unindoctrinated, his natural and fertile genius attacked the ancient problems of philosophical theology with freshness, vigour, and matchless sincerity. His was a great mind, of enormous speculative power and range, and, while unaccustomed to the traditional categories of formal philosophy, it was, nevertheless, capable of taking its place among the great minds of the ages. Unlike other philosophers, Jacob Boehme was no literary artist, and, even though his language does rise at times to heights of cadence, rhythm, and outer ear-quality, still the peculiar vocabulary which he adopted renders his ideas difficult and sometimes obscure. He is hard to read and even harder to understand. His

queer words, peculiar symbols, and primitive ideas of rhetoric are more of a barrier than they are an invitation to the rich treasures of his speculation. They have prevented all but the most stubborn from knowing his real spirit. Emil Bouëttroux, himself an admirer of Boehme's speculative achievement, confesses that he finds Boehme's language

a mixture of abstruse theology, alchemy, speculations on the indiscernible, and the incomprehensible, fantastic poetry and mystic effusion: in fact, a dazzling chaos. 1

Gerhard TerSteegen, certainly one of the most devout of German Evangelicals and a mystic of wide reputation, wrote:

I cannot say I understand (them), but I read (his writings) until I was filled with strange fears and bewilderment... At last I took the books to their owner, and it was like a weight lifted off my heart. 2.

John Wesley was more emphatic, for he felt that 'Behmen's writings' were the

most sublime nonsense, inimitable bombast, fustian not to be paralleled. 3

Yet, in spite of this difficulty and apparent incomprehensibility in Boehme's language, there can be little doubt that his ideas, however ill they may have been expressed, became one of the major forces in modern philosophy. Hegel consecrated an elegaic chapter to Boehme in his Vorlesung über die

1 Historical Studies of Philosophy, p.171. (Whenever titles appear in either of the Bibliographies then the information regarding date of publication and place of publication is omitted in the footnotes. Otherwise this information is given with the first appearance of the title.)

2 Quoted by H.E. Gowan, Life of Gerhard TerSteegen, London 1898, p.42f.

3 Quoted by G.C. Cell, The Rediscovery of John Wesley, New York, 1935, p.117.

Journal June 4, 1742.

Geschichte der Philosophie, considering Jacob Boehme the¹ unacknowledged father of German philosophy. Schelling's enthusiasm led him to assert that Boehme was eine Wunderer-scheinung in der Geschichte der Menschheit.² While most historians of philosophy are in superficial agreement that in the speculations of Boehme

religious thought is carried to its limit, a limit which no subsequent attempt of a similar kind has succeeded in transcending,³

they cannot agree upon the exact element in Boehme which is significant, nor upon the nature of that significance. Hegel⁴ felt that Boehme was a pantheist-idealist. Baader believed that Boehme's realism gave him his true significance, earning him his place as the Christian philosopher.⁵ F.C. Baur⁶ reproached Boehme for his gnostic manicheism, while others saw in his thought merely the orthodox theism of traditional, conservative Protestant theology -- nothing at all Unchristian.⁷ While agreeing upon Jacob Boehme's importance, the philosophers tend to read their own little systems into him, seizing upon isolated passages to enforce their own speculations.

1 Cf. German edition, Werke, xv, Berlin 1936, p.297 et passim. Vide tr. by Handane, London 1896, III, p.188 et seq.

2 Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke, II,iii, Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1858, p. 123.

3 H. Höffding, A History of Modern Philosophy, tr. Meyer, London 1924, I, p.76.

4 Werke, xv, p.301ff.

5 Vorlesungen über Jacob Boehmes Theologumena und Philosophie; Werke, III, Leipzig 1852, p.357; Cf. Bibliography.

6 Die Christliche Gnosis, Tübingen 1835, pp.586, 591.

7 Cf. Alexandre Koyré, La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme, pp. ixff.

If the historians of philosophy are at least agreed upon Jacob Boehme's significance, the church historians, confident in their confessional absolutism, are in violent opposition. Boehme has been the subject of almost endless controversy. Gottfried Arnold, prince of the Pietist historians, gave Boehme a large place in his history, but Arnold held to the justification of the doubter.¹ The Commission of the Churches of Berne, 8 February 1699, condemned Boehme's works as schwärmerische und fanatische Bücher.² Norner saw nothing in Boehme but a fermenting chaos of speculative impulses.³ Ritschl opposed Boehme simply because the shoemaker set himself against the evils in his Lutheran church and he argued that Boehme's Weg zu Christo was used by his followers as a weapon against Lutheran orthodoxy. It was.. Ritschl concluded that the task of understanding Boehme cannot be completed because the shoemaker's writings are not clear.⁴ Reinhold Seeberg mentions Boehme only twice in his two volumes of Dogmengeschichte.⁵

There is no agreement about Jacob Boehme's significance. He is condemned and praised, damned, and exalted. Yet the incontestable fact is that no one will fully understand the

1 Kirchen u. Ketzer Historeie, passim.

2 W. Hadorn, Geschichte des Pietismus in den schweizerischen Reformierten Kirchen, Konstanz 1901, p.82.

3 History of Protestant Theology, tr. Tobson and Taylor, Edinburgh 1871, II, p.184.

4 Geschichte des Pietismus, I, Bonn 1880, p.96; and II, Bonn 1884, pp.301,302.

5 Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, IV,i,Leipzig 1917, and IV,ii,Leipzig, 1920.

enigmatic shoemaker's full significance because he was, and remains, a profounder spirit than most of his critics and admirers. Like Shakespeare whose near contemporary he was, Jacob Boehme transcends those who write about him, and study of the books about him serves more to reveal their authors' minds than to uncover Boehme's profound spirit. Many men, some of them great and others only ordinary, have been grasped by Boehme's genius: theologians, philosophers, scientists, physicians, poets, actors, historians, literary critics, revolutionaries, and plain dirt farmers. Perhaps this universal appeal is because Jacob Boehme's was a universal genius.

II.

Jacob Boehme is known by the world as a mystic: indeed, an eminent modern theologian has written that Jacob Boehme¹ is the greatest gnostic mystic of all time. If this is true, if this is an honest judgment, then the proper question to ask is: what is the content of this mystical gnosis? What is the character of Boehme's mysticism? If Boehme claimed final knowledge about reality, then what was that knowledge? Can others know what he knew? Berdyaev asserts that the description of Boehme's gnostic insight 'presents an almost insurmountable obstacle to rational theology and metaphysics', but what is rationality?² What is metaphysics? How can either rationality or metaphysical necessity prevent communication of gnosis from one mind to another? Is reason primary?

Many such questions arise and they are certainly important for they raise the difficult, and since the days of Immanuel Kant the basic, question of the nature of religious and of mystical knowledge. There are two possible attitudes regarding the strange claims which the mystics make: first, these claims may be dismissed as the arrogant assumptions of deluded minds. They may be waived away with a gesture of final dismissal. When this is done the struggling faith of many pious

1 N. Berdyaev, Spirit and Reality, London 1939, p.144
 2. Ibid., p.144ff.

and sincerely honest men and women -- some of the finest spirits of the ages -- is rejected because of a preconditioned aversion ~~to~~ this type of faith and knowledge. This is the one view.

But another attitude is possible. These claims may be faced up with as proper readings of 'inner experience' -- whatever ('experience' may mean -- in which case scientific objectivity in the recording of inner phenomena is not to be expected because the mystic participates in an experience in which he is subject and object simultaneously. 'Experience' is then understood not in phenom~~on~~ological terms as including merely the theoretical explanation of that event. 'Experience' presumes the phenomena as well as the speculative description of those phenomena. But even this definition does not solve the basic problem for the question still may be asked: is the mystic's reading of his experience -- all of it -- valid?

It should be remembered that objectivity is not possible in recording religious experience because the believer cannot describe inner events and remain objective. He cannot describe an experience in which he stands in larger relationship for to 'experience' he must be subject and he cannot describe this relationship and remain both subject and object. To experience he must be subject, to describe an object. This is the parad~~ox~~ in all mystical literature and this is why Jacob Boehme was baffled by the paucity of human language. He had shared in a relationship with the whole of his being,

and when he sought to tell others about it he found that he could do so only at the expense of distorting that relationship. This is why Boehme's testimony, like that of all other mystics, should be thought of as witness, as living witness in an act of supreme faith. It should be viewed as witness to the passive experience of being grasped.

What did Jacob Boehme gain from his 'Mystical experience'? What did he discover when he was grasped in the act of believing? What, then, was his mystical gnosis?

In a Letter to Caspar Linder, 10 May 1622, Boehme recorded his mystical gnosis which he had received in the experience of being grasped:

But I will not conceal from you the simple-child-like way which I walk in Christ Jesus; for I can write nothing of myself, but as of a child, which neither knows nor understands anything: neither has ever learned, but only that which the Lord vouches safe to know in me; according to the measure, as He manifests Himself in me.

For I never desired to know anything of the Divine Mystery, much less understood I the way how to seek or find it; I knew nothing of it, as is the condition of poor lay-men in their simplicity, I sought only after the heart of Jesus Christ, that I might hide myself therein from the wrathful anger of God, and the violent assaults of the Devil; and I besought the Lord earnestly for His holy spirit, and His Grace, that He would be pleased to bless and guide me in Him; and take away that from me, which did turn me away from Him, and I resigned myself wholly to Him, that I might not live to my own will, but to His; and that He only might lead and direct me; to the end, that I might be His child in His Son Jesus Christ.

In this my earnest Christian seeking and desire (wherein I suffered many a shrewd repulse, but at last being resolved rather to put my life to utmost hazard, than to give over and leave off) the gate was opened unto me, that in one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at an University; at which I did exceedingly admire, and I knew not how it happened to me; and thereupon I turned my heart to praise God for it. (Epist., x, 5-7) 1.

1 For a List of Epistles, Cf. Appendix One, #3.

Here is no mystical ecstasy, no erotic bridal-chamber mish-mash of subject and object; but here is a straight-forward prosaic experience of knowledge. And Boehme's own outline of the gnosis which this experience yielded reads almost like the outlined divisions of a system of formal philosophical theology. He says

For I saw and knew the Being of all Beings, the Byss (the ground or original foundation), and Abyss (that which is without ground, or bottomless and fathomless); also the birth (or eternal generation) of the holy Trinity; the descent and original of this world, and of all creatures, through the divine wisdom; I knew and saw in myself all the three worlds; namely, the divine, angelical, and paradisaical (world) and then the dark world; being the original or nature to the first. And then thirdly, the external, and visible world, being a procreation, or external birth; or as a substance expressed, or spoken forth, from both the internal and spiritual worlds; and as I saw, and knew the whole Being (or working essence) in the evil, and in the good; and the mutual original, and existence of each of them; and likewise how the pregnant mother (genetrix or fruitful bearing womb of eternity) brought forth, so that I did not only greatly wonder at it, but did also exceedingly rejoice. (Epist., x,8)

This is the outline of his gnosis, but his revelation and knowledge was not fully gained in the short quarter of an hour:

Yet it opened itself in me from time to time, as in a young plant; albeit the same was with me for a space of twelve years, and I was as it were pregnant (or breeding of it) with all, and found a powerful driving and instigation within me, before I could bring forth into external form of writing; which afterward fell upon me as a sudden shower, which hits whatsoever it lights upon; just so it happened to me, whatsoever I could not apprehend and bring into the external principle of my mind, the same I wrote down... Afterward the sun did shine upon me a good while, but not in a constant manner. (Epist., x,8-12)

This is certainly the mystic's typical claim. Boehme's 'I',
imprisoned in his own self like an oyster in his shell,¹ found

1 Plato, Phaedrus, #250

the gate opened to him so that the tides of the universal sea washed and rocked him. And the result of this 'opening' was knowledge. He gained new insight, admittedly incomplete and still to be speculatively realized, but new insight which dominated all his life and thought. This Boehme's mystical 'experience' was gnostic in that it produced knowledge. He was not melted into the abyss of the Godhead, nor was he caught up into an ecstatic nirvana, for from this 'mystical Experience' he gained a coordinating principle about which he might muster all his knowledge and motley perceptions.

The gnostic insight which Boehme's 'experience' yielded unlocked his world. Even the plants in the garden spoke to him in their mysterious 'natural language', for he saw something in his world which the ancient Greeks, like the medieval monks and nuns, had shunned. Boehme's gnostic insight was in open revolt against all that medieval thought had cherished. It was no confirmation of tradition. Boehme did not reject medieval dualisms just because he was a monist. On the contrary he set up dualisms more realistic and truer to the nature of reality than any medieval dualisms had ever been. And Boehme's mystical gnosis -- however remote its speculative realization may have been -- rested upon this insight into the nature of reality which his gnostic experience had given him. It abides throughout the many changes within his writings. It was the central theme of his work. And, if the truth of his

claim can be attested ^(to) by the consistency of this theme's appearance in his work then there can be no doubt about its validity. In almost the first sentence of his first book he wrote:

In this...are found two qualities, a good one and an evil one, which are in each other as one thing in this world, in all powers, in the stars, and the elements, as also in all the creatures; and no creature in the flesh, in the natural life, can subsist, unless it has the two qualities. (Aurora, i, 2)

This insight was purified and refined until near the end of his life, in his last work, he wrote:

The Reader is to know that in Yes and No consist all things, be they divine, diabolic, terrestrial, or however they may be named...Yet it cannot be said that the Yes is separated from the No, and that they are two things side by side with each other... Without these two which are in continual conflict, all things would be a nothing, and would stand still without movement. (Theos. Frag., iii, 2, 3, 4)

This is the basic gnostic insight which Boehme's mystical experience yielded him, and it is nothing else than the dialectical principle. Jacob Boehme's mystical gnosis consisted simply in the insight that ~~reality~~ reality was dialectically constituted.

Now, what is dialectics?

Dialectics is the belief that this world is the scene of tremendous conflicts -- conflicts which determine the nature of existence.¹ Life is dominated by the principle of polarization, of attraction and repulsion, of Jah and Nein. This is Real-dialektik, a metaphysical conflict within the nature of reality,

1. Cf Eisler, Wörterbuch der Philosophischen Begriffe, 4 ed., Berlin 1927, I, pp. 268ff.

This, Schleiermacher's 'immutable law' is nothing else than Boehme's law of dialectics -- the precious insight which the shoemaker's gnostic and mystical experience had yielded him. This is the abiding, permanent, central, dominant theme of all his writings! This is his mystical gnosis: In Jah und ^Nein bestehen alle Dinge! (Theos. Frag., iii,2)

It is, perhaps, obvious that Jacob Boehme's gnostic and mystical insight into the nature of reality was neither new nor unique. Other men in other ages and climes have shared it. There was, therefore, no special, particular, individually conditioned mystical insight which Boehme had received: he had no new and individually unique bit of knowledge. There was nothing **esoteric** about it. There was no special illumination. And no extravagant, supercilious claims should therefore be made for it. Boehme made no such claims himself:

I am only a simple, mean instrument, God works and makes what He pleases; what God wills, that I will also; and whatsoever He wills not, that likewise I will not.
(Epist., x,30)

What is unique and new though is Boehme's own speculative realization of that insight, his philosophizing. If mystical philosophy is dependent upon an initial intuitive impetus, then Jacob Boehme was a mystic in so far as his impetus was mystical.

And Jacob Boehme's entire mystical speculation was constructed about this mystical, dialectical insight. Between the unrealized Ungrund and the fully realized Ruhe, or Sabbath of the Soul, between Alpha and Omega, there lies a pulsating

within life itself. This struggle was seen by Heraclitus, by Hegel, by Bachoffen, by Marx, by Nietzsche, by Dostoievsky, and by Jacob Boehme. Realdialektik includes the logical definitions in which dialectics is a process of reasoning, or rather a manner of arriving at knowledge about reality.

The metaphysical principle of dialectics (Gegensatzigkeit) is that doctrine which Friedrich Schleiermacher described in the following manner:

You know how the deity, by an immutable law, has compelled Himself to divide His great work even to infinity. Each definite thing can only be made up by melting together two opposite activities. Each of his eternal thoughts can only be actualized in two hostile yet twin forms, one of which cannot exist except by means of the other. The whole corporeal world, insight into which is the highest aim of your researches, appears to the best instructed and contemplative among you, simply a never ending play of opposing forces. Each life is merely the uninterrupted manifestation of a perpetually renewed gain and loss, as each thing has its determinate existence by uniting and holding fast in a special way the opposing forces of Nature. Wherefore the spirit also, in so far as it manifests itself in finite life, must be subject to the same law. The human soul, as is shown both by its passing actions and its inward characteristics, has its existence chiefly in two opposing impulses. Following the one impulse, it strives to establish itself as an individual. For increase no less than sustenance, it draws what surrounds it to itself, weaving it into its life, and absorbing it into its own being. The other impulse, again, is the dread fear to stand alone over against the whole, the longing to surrender oneself and be absorbed in a greater, to be taken hold of and determined... Just as no material thing can exist by only one of the forces of corporeal nature, every soul shares in the two original tendencies of spiritual nature. At the extremes one impulse may preponderate almost to the exclusion of the other, but the perfection of the living world consists in this, that between these opposite ends all combinations are actually present in humanity. 1

1 Speeches on Religion (Reden), translated Oman, London 1893, pp.3-4.

world of strife, struggle, and manifold tension and strain. Between Ungrund and Ruhe there lies a tremendous world of Realdialektik -- a world in which dialectics is not merely methodological, as Plato's sometimes is, but dynamic and projected into the heart of reality itself. Our sinful world is constituted by two conflicting forces, a conflict determinative of life itself. All living beings are dominated by this polarization, by this attraction and repulsion. Yet Boehme was not content to put dialectics merely into creation: he saw Yes and No in God Himself. In spite of the almost insurmountable obstacle of articulating this vision, Boehme's spirit 'broke through the gates of hell' (Aurora xix,11) and suddenly in herbs and grass and in all the creatural world knew what and how God is, and what His will is. This is Boehme's claim: that God had made Himself known in direct presence, and it is evident that he knew more than he was able, with pain, to articulate. And it is perhaps the inadequacy of human language rather than failure to see or to touch which seems at first sight to falsify and impoverish this vision of reality.

This is a prime problem -- the common problem of all religious philosophy. Can Boehme's God be the same God who created the universe? Paracelsus's doctrine that man is a microcosmic image of God could not help him for this could only explain what the revealed God was like. (Mysterium Magnum, i,1). The problem goes deeper. Man wants an all-good God. Everywhere he finds an evil world. Is God then not all good? Or is He not all powerful? His will is to be done, His Kingdom

is to come on earth; yet nature drips red from fang and claw in grim disobedience to the Creator's revealed will. The answer to this problem was implied in Boehme's quest for salvation:

From my youth up I have sought only one thing: the salvation of my soul, the means of gaining possession of the Kingdom of God. (I.Tilk., 20)

As Bouëttroux has said, this object was destined to raise the profoundest of metaphysical questions because in seeking to save himself from the pangs and passions of an evil will Boehme was destined to seek realization of the conflicting elements in his universe.¹ "Religious living involves tension because it is continual alternative movement from the many to the One."² Boehme sought redemption of his self and of his world by a restoration of the primitive harmony of being -- a harmony extending to all of creation.

When I take up a stone or a clod of earth and look upon it, then I see that which is above, and that which is below; yea, the whole world therein. (Mysterium Magnum, ii,6)

But Boehme was no natural theologian because he found his God within his universe. Nature was for him one of the manifestations of God. This is the logical result of his gnostic insight and from one point of view constitutes his second gnostic and mystical insight:

When we consider the visible world with its essences, and consider the life of the creatures, then we find therein the likeness of the spiritual world, which is hidden in the visible world, as the soul in the body; and see thereby that the hidden God is nigh unto all; and yet wholly hidden in the visible essences. (Mysterium Magnum, Preface)

¹ Historical Studies in Philosophy, p.176.

² Edwyn Bevan, Symbolism and Belief, London 1938, pp.123-124

The deus absconditus lies hidden in all nature.

These are the two fundamental insights which supported Boehme's mystical speculation: Good and evil are in all things, and the deus absconditus lied hidden in all reality. These ideas dominated his thinking, created the problems which pressed for solution, and ultimately ended in a realized and developed system of philosophical theology.

III.

When these two points have been established the heart of the problem has not yet been reached for the question still remains: was Jacob Boehme a mystic? Boehme certainly described this gnostic experience with erotic imagery, although in the experience itself wherein this gnostic insight into the dialectical character of reality was obtained there was no ecstatic loss of self-consciousness. Boehme claimed to have broken through the 'veil' and to have been embraced as a bridegroom embraces his bride. The only thing to which this can be compared, he says, is

that wherein life is generated in the midst of death, and the resurrection of the dead. In this light my spirit saw through all, and in and by all the creatures, even in herbs and grssss it knew God. (Aurora, xix,12)

Here is penetration, Durchbruch! Gilson insists that in St Bernard's view of the unio mystica there need be no annihilation of individuality. So also in Boehme. There was no nirvana. Mystical union respects 'the real distinction between the will of God and the will of man. There was neither a confusion of the two substances in general ¹ or in particular.' The Aurora, Boehme's first book' may not have been mystical even though Boehme seems to have had a gnostic experience that approached the mystical. Certainly there was in it dialectic, tension of good evil, struggle, strife of opposites within the basic structure of

¹ E. Gilson, The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard, London 1940. p.123.

reality, and a longing search for the resolution of this tension. But mysticism? Perhaps! Even later in Princ. and Dreyfach¹ Boehme's mysticism, if that is what ~~is~~ is, was not of the ecstatic type. Obviously he had found union with nature, and his God, even his deus absconditus, was hidden in nature. But, is this mysticism?

In June, 1632, when some of the tracts that make up Der Weg Zu Christo were written, Jacob Boehme achieved a new form of religious longing which was not present in his earlier works -- a longing wholly Christian, Protestant, Lutheran. There are several broad^s hints that this new religious longing was the result of a second and more fully realized mystical experience which took place sometime around 1619, although there is no specific internal evidence, except these few scattered hints, to allow for the reconstruction of this mystical experience. Boehme was strangely silent about it. When he realized that his search for the resolution of the disunities if his experience would not succeed as long as he continued to seek regeneration in substantial terms, then he forsook this way. Sometime around 1621 he became aware of the inadequacy of the alchemical search for the philosopher's stone, that principle which was to transmute base elements into harmonious love!

If you would find the lapis philosophorum, set yourselves to attain the new birth in Christ. (Menschw., I, ix, 10)

In Menschw. the lapis philosophorum is still in considerable

¹ For the traditional scheme for abbreviating the titles of Boehme's various tracts, Cf. Appendix I, #2.

fellowship with substantiality, but later in the tracts that compose Der Weg zu Christo the philosopher's stone has become the Eckstein -- the corner-stone which the builder/s rejected, Christ! Boehme seems to have returned to the Lutheran insistence upon repentance, resignation, rebirth, and regeneration, to the Luther who had taken purgatory from the lower world into this one, who had changed an external, mechanical show of penance into the inwardness of right despair for oneself--
Busskampf!

This principle of growth must be allowed in Boehme's religious life -- in fact, Boehme cannot be understood without postulating it. Neither his religious longing nor his speculation were static, and the extent of his growth, its tremendous range and rhythmic sweep, was entirely characteristic of his synthesizing genius.

Boehme's basic religious impulse was thoroughly Lutheran: first and above all he had inherited the Lutheran Bible.¹ His language was Lutheran in its swing and sweep, charged with the reformer's rounded rhythms. Boehme was able to contemplate the mysteries of his world, wherein God was hidden, not only free from Hellenistic indoctrination and unshackled by Greek dualisms, but also with Luther's majestic translation open and unchained on his own writing table in his own house. This was the first fruit of the Lutheran Reformation. Only with an

¹ Boehme's Bible, it should be recalled, contained the Old Testament Apocrypha.

unchained Bible in his vernacular did Jacob Boehme become what he was. Without it, condemned to second-hand readings, to inadequate sermons, and to rigid sacramental systems, he would have been, like his forbears, a spiritual serf, bound to a bestial life. When Luther unchained the Bible and translated it into Boehme's Muttersprache he gave the shoemaker a new and dazzling world, open to the revelations of God's own Word. And Boehme loved his Bible with a devotion fully as deep as the reformer's -- a devotion which the pious peasantry of all lands have lavished upon the one great book of their lives. And if Boehme loved his Bible, if he tried to integrate it into his own speculations, then he also know his hymnal by heart for even today German Lutherans know the old hymns of their faith. At one place Boehme gleefully quotes at Gregory Richter, his persecuting pastor, the sixth verse of a Lutheran hymn:

Christus kam auf Erden arm
 Dass er unser sich erbarm,
 Und in den Himmel machte reich,
 Und seinen lieben Engln gleich.¹

Boehme also had read deep in the book of nature, and each world, the Biblical and the natural, aided in interpreting the other. First Boehme contemplated his world; then he read his Lutheran Bible; and resolutely he sought to reconcile the divergent worlds which they presented to his mind. Here is an

¹ Apol. Richt., 57' This is a slight variation of Luther's well-known Christmas hymn which begins: 'Gelober seyst du Jesu Christ, dass du Mensche gebohren bist.'

empirical dialectic: the world and the Bible! Can they be reconciled? Each seems to contradict the other! Each seems to explain the other! Boehme's own inner dialectic was his stubborn search to resolve the antithesis of nature and Scripture. His full significance begins to appear when he is seen as a profound but nevertheless simple man, unindoctrinated by Greek dualisms, who was seeking to understand his own world in Biblical terms.



For Jacob Boehme was child of both the Renaissance and the Reformation. From the former he inherited his zest for life, his acceptance of the realities of the world and all that they implied. From the latter he received his piety and his devotion, for both the Lutheran Bible and the Kleiner Catechismus produced in him a deeply sensitive and purposive soul -- a devotion weaned on the Lombard's Sententia or on Aristotle's Logics. Boehme was both poet and penitent, eroticist and ascetic, sinner and ~~saint~~ together! He was an emancipated child of the northern Renaissance trying to see his brave new world with Christian eyes.

Two factors helped shape his genius: the world-view of the Renaissance and the religious character of his Lausitz homeland.




IV.

But mysticism?

When Jacob Boehme's 'mystical way' as found in Uebersinn. Leben is compared with the scheme of mystical ascent and union characteristic of the medieval age, then the great revolution which Boehme wrought is clear.

Medieval Christianity had been marked by an upward tendency which was reflected in all its religious thought. The Fathers in the Desert, driven mad by their insensate hatred of all social and human values, embarked upon a life constituted by a radical negation of nature. Medieval thinkers, codifying this contemptus saeculi,¹ justified this world-renunciation in their metaphysics. The dominant pictorial image was the Alexandrine world-scheme with its sharp separation of heaven and hell and with its ideas of double motion: the emanation of the all from God () and the return of the all to the one (). Knowledge of God was also built upon this ladder principle.² Medieval mysticism was characterized by schemes of ascent, and many symbols were employed: journey, ladder, Itinerarium, pilgrimage. After Augustine and Pseudo-

¹ E. Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, New York 1936, p.108.

² Dionysius sought to gain knowledge of God by logical steps outlined as via affirmationis (), via negationis (), and via superlationis (). Cf. Joh. Scotus Erigena, De Divisione naturae, Liv. i, cap. xiv. Migne, Pat. Log., 122. Both Richard and Hugh of St Victor developed similar epistemological ladders.

¹
 Dionysius this ladder symbolism became traditional and the ascent of the soul to God was expressed in terms of his ecclesiastical and heavenly hierarchies. Three 'heavenly ladders' of the soul's ascent were known: the ladder of merit, the analogical ladder of speculation, and the anagogical ladder of mystical ascent.² The typical literature of the medieval period was symbolic and a man like Dante Alighieri, living at the close of the thirteenth century, created a poem in which the entire medieval scheme was characterized.³ Other forms of literature expressed this upward urge for Fable, Allegory, Courtly Literature, the Grail legends were certainly 'Quest' Literature, delineating a soul's seeking purification by an ascending from level to level, from hierarchy to hierarchy.

Jacob Boehme's 'Copernican' revolution in mysticism was to do away with this ladder business, with this ascending 'Quest' tendency as well as all of its metaphysical implications. For him there was no going back, no climbing up, no return, no ascending hierarchy of levels or static stages, each one purer than the last, by which the sinful soul climbed up into the bosom of the One (—) and there was graciously and gratuitously relieved of its self-hood and its self-consciousness. No, no! 'Heaven and hell are present everywhere'. (Uebersinn. Leb., 274)
 There is no place, no category from which man is shut out and

¹ Dionysius was translated into Latin in the ninth Century by Erigena.

² A. Nygren, Agape and Eros, II, ii, London, 1938, p. 403.

³ H.F. Dunbar, Symbolism in Medieval Thought and its Consummation in the Divine Comedy, New Haven 1929, p. 23.

to which he must return. Boehme replaced this climbing up into the majesty of God, this theologia gloriae, with a God who penetrated into the human heart, a theologia crucis! As Luther had reformed theology and the church, so Jacob Boehme reformed mysticism, creating a new type of mystical speculation in which the Dionysian influence was absent. In Boehme the Dionysian eros was replaced by Christian agape. The finite is not self-negating so that it may enjoy union with the Infinite. On the contrary the finite seeks to ~~remove~~ those self-created barriers within itself which prevent it from being fully grasped by the Infinite. In Boehme's mysticism God's Grace flows into and possesses the soul, just as Christ's Spirit was possessed by the Father when He surrendered His will to Him on the Cross. For this surrender three things are necessary:

The first is that you must give your ego-centric will over to God. The second is that you must hate your ego-centric will so that you do not do that to which your own will drives you. The third is that you prostrate ~~yourself~~ yourself patiently before the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ in order to bear the temptations of nature and creature yourself. And when you do this God will speak into you. He will bring your resigned will into Himself, into the supernatural ground, and then you will hear what the Lord speaks within you. (Uebersinn. Leb., 6) * 1

This is a long way from the ladder symbolism of the medieval mystics.

Jacob Boehme's mysticism consisted in his stubborn and admirable attempts to resolve the disunities of his own being which prevented God from breaking into his soul.

1. Whenever quotations are marked by an asterik (*) then the translation is made by the present writer,

Whatever else mysticism may be, it does imply some sort of union between discordant element in man's being or in his 'experience', whatever the word may mean. It implies a unity which may be explained in terms of identity, or mutual indwelling, of mutual love, of mutual intuition, of mutual willing -- but a unity in which the strict difference between subject and object has been removed.

Mysticism derives from _____ and ultimately from _____. _____ implies a closing of both the eyes and of the mouth. That which was seen when the eyes were closed cannot be described when the eyes again are opened. The word implied knowledge not merely of secrets but also of the secret purposes of God which can hardly be communicated without the violation of a divine command.¹ In the New Testament _____ is closely related to the meaning of those words often interchanged with it: _____, _____, _____.²

There emerges from the meaning of the word mysticism three aspects, related perhaps in a profound and irrational way: the closed eyes, the closed mouth, and the active, initiatory aspect, or the so-called mystical way. Stated in different terms, mysticism implies first an 'experience' of unity, which, dialectically considered, is possible only on the basis of an experience of ~~dis~~unity; secondly, an attempt to rationalize

¹ E. Hatch, Essays in Biblical Greek, Oxford 1889, p.58

² Ibid., pp.60-61. In ecclesiastical Latin _____ was expressed by Sacramentum.

this hidden sight; and thirdly a search to regain that lost¹ vision in new fulness, power and permanency.

Historians and interpreters of mysticism have considered it an attempt to answer two questions: can truth be known, and can desire be satisfied.² It is said that the mystic answers both questions in the affirmative, grounding his answers in his own experienced solution to what is, perhaps, the oldest of consciously formulated philosophical questions -- Plato's perplexing problem of the many and the One.³ Mysticism implies some sort of search for a unio mystica but this experience -- whatever it may be -- still has the divided world of creatureliness implied in it. Here is essential dialectic for when thus conceived there are two modes of mystical experience. And both of them are important. There is the Mount of Transfiguration and there is also the Golgotha way. Stubborn insistence upon defining mysticism as including only the former aspect -- ecstatic union -- results in an unwarranted truncation of field. Job said:

I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. (xliii,56)

This dual way of vision and repentance was also Jacob Boehme's

1 This threefold division may be related to the ordo salutis which Proclus defined in his In Primum Platonis Alcibiadem and which became the basis of medieval mysticism: purification, ; enlightenment, ; and union, . The idea goes behind Plato to the Mysteries. Inherent in this threefold division seems to be the insight that the first knowledge must be augmented by cathartic actions.

2. H. Brinton, The Mystic Will, pp.15-16.

3. Philebus, 14c.

way to Christ -- his mystical way -- for it embraced both the holy discontent, with its recognition of the manifoldness of existence, and the ultimate vision of the One.

If mysticism includes the search for the reunion of the many into the One, as well as the actual unio mystica -- whatever this 'flight of the alone to the Alone' may be -- then, dialectically viewed, it presumed a previous experience of the disunities of existence. The unio mystica, whatever it may be, is possible only in terms of its antithesis -- an experience of disunity. Sin and Grace are then dialectical dependents, and mysticism, far from being a flight from the world of tension and disunity, builds itself squarely upon that world, for the basis characteristic of mysticism is that¹ behind diversity there is unity. The experience of the disunities of existence is the only and necessary basis upon which the search for the unio mystica can be built.

The literature of mysticism is vast. Many types are known. Yet all seem to have a common direction in that they point towards an overwhelming experience of unity as the summum bonum of human existence. But union of what? This is a tremendously important, as well as a neglected, question: union of what? Union may mean union with God's substance, with His will, with His power. etc. It may mean union with nature. It may mean ~~mean~~ emotional union within man's consciousness, as the

¹ C.F.E. Spurgeon, Mysticism in English Literature, Cambridge, 1929, p.3ff.

drawing together and final identification of man's two divided wills. It may mean union of the individual 'I' with the great cosmic consciousness, visualized by the metaphor of drops of water merging with the immensity of the sea. It may even mean union with the nation or racial consciousness, as in Alfred Rosenberg's vicious nationalistic mysticism.¹ Indeed, mysticism is the search for the resolution of the disunities of experience in an overwhelming unio mystica, but the question still remains: union of what? And when once this question is put then mysticism becomes demonic, for it has potentialities towards either evil or good. It may be the supreme meaning of human existence, and it may perhaps be the core and kernal of sin.

This question regarding the nature of the unio mystica must be answered in terms of an experienced duality. Such an experience of duality, or even of plurality, is just as essential to mysticism as the unio mystica itself. When this is grasped then the dialectical character of the mystical alternation between closed eyes and closed mouth becomes clearer. Mysticism is the search for the resolution of the disunities of experience, or perhaps of the disharmony of being. It is bi-polar. One part is characterized by what may, perhaps, be termed a holy discontent, a social and personal maladjustment² which seeks either to transform or to redeem a world. The other part is

¹ A. Rosenberg, Der Mythos des Zwanzigjahrhunderts, Munich 1938.

² Leuba believes that all mystica are maladjusted, and perhaps he is right, Yet mysticism is their way out. Cf. J.H. Leuba, The Psychology of Religious Mysticism, New York, 1925, passim.

characterized by being focused in that power through which this transformation will be achieved and in which, as with Boehme, the final unification will take place. Bernard of Clairvaux, prince of the medieval mystics, said that his highest degree of love -- love of self for God's sake -- was unattainable in this life. Only **after** the resurrection would it be possible. And perhaps it is not essential to mysticism that the actual unio mystica be experienced here in this world: Perhaps the ultimate goal may be apocalyptic or in the least ~~supre~~-historical! Perhaps it may be known only in anticipation here in this life? Perhaps mysticism is only the search for the resolution of the disharmony of being, a duality which ~~precedes~~ the possibility of ultimate union!

To give Christian bias to the nature of this unio mystica three facts are essential: In Christianity the God-man dualism rests upon the idea that man was first made in God's image, upon the insight that in its first use that image was corrupted, and upon the world-transforming experience that in Jesus Christ and His passion that image was restored. These three theological facts -- imago dei, sin, and restitution -- condition Christian mysticism.

Jacob Boehme's basic experience was his own divided self, for his self was the Centrum -- to use one of his fine words -- of his existence. And the dualism which he found there -- no, the dualism which his Separator created there -- he found also in all reality. His self was ~~divided~~. His world

was divided. All of existence, he felt, was characterized by this duality. It was, in fact, this strife of opposites which made his world go around. He had no Aristotilian unmoved mover. His Ungrund was the source of the opposition and of divided existence. It was also rest. The ultimate union which Boehme sought was the resolution of these disunities in a triumphing Wiedergeburt, a penultimate reunion and harmony of all being, a resurrection of the new being without this worm-carcass and this house of sin. For it is, he said, like the resurrection from the dead.

If one can believe Boehme's reading of the meaning of existence there is hope. Out of the wars of this world there will come rest. Boehme envisaged no easy solution. His new birth was cosmic in its significance. The ageless struggle between Michael and the Dragon is fought out in all reality. What would the ethical victory of Good over Evil avail if the metaphysical roots of evil within reality were not overcome? Boehme was no Hellenist. Salvation was not merely escaping the flesh. The flesh too must be regenerated -- those powers of decomposition, decay, and death inherent in reality, within substantial existence, must be overcome before the redemption of the world will be complete.

Indeed, evil in all its forms has been overcome in anticipation because the Breaker-through-the-gates has planted His Lily in this world,

and this Lily grows in the elements wonderfully against the terrible storm of hell, and against the Kingdom of this world. (Princ., xvii,36)

This Lily shall blossom on earth as in God's garden. Then shall man wear his noble garland. Then shall he gain his precious Pearl. For the goal of life is not deathlessness and partial redemption. Life's goal is Resurrection. The meaning of existence is not its division into patterns and forms but penultimate victory in God's Kingdom by rebirth and regeneration. For He has said:

I am the Resurrection and the Life.

BOOK ONE

THE EMPIRICAL BASES OF JACOB BOEHME'S MYSTICISM

Der Schlüssel zum Himmel
Ist Marter und Pein,
Und wer ihn nicht versucht,
Der kommt nicht herein.

--Old Swiss hymn.

I. INTRODUCTORY

If Jacob Boehme saw in creation light and darkness, good and evil, Jah and Nein, if the shoemaker's primary mystical gnosis consisted in his vision that all things that are are dialectically constituted, then he was a sensitive and impressionable child of the age in which he lived. Seeking for the sources of his dialectical mysticism one need probe no deeper than those seething, churning days of the religious wars.

It was an age in which reason and passion were confused.

Already in 1528 a devout Silesian, Caspar Schwenkfeldt, had written: Es gehet eine neue Welt daher, die alte stirbet abe.¹ And it had been Martin Luther who had released the flood-tide of spiritual unrest. Men were uneasy with their new problems and with those new worlds that still waited to be conquered.

¹ Quoted by H. Ecke, C. Schwenkfeld, Luther, und die Gedanke einer Apostolischen Reformation, Berlin 1911, p.100.

The old world with its limited horizons and with its worn-out problems was dying. A new attitude towards life -- perhaps even a new life -- was waiting to be born. This is just what the word 'Renaissance' means : new birth!¹ But new birth of what? Even in its original meaning the word 'Renaissance' had embraced the old schwärmerische religious dreams of the Calabrian prophet, Joachim of Flora -- dreams which had been more sharply defined by his followers among Franciscan Spirituals and Dominican mystics.² Joachim had united 'Renaissance' with 'Reformation', combining the New Testament idea of the new birth with the historical idea of a religious Reformation. This was variously expressed: renasci, regeneratio, nova vita, renovatio, Wiedergeburt! But, of what? And the answer was, of course, of Christianity! Back to the Gospels! Back to the purity of primitive Christianity! These were the cries. And St Francis had sought renewed living: secundum formam evangelii, or secundum formam ab apostolis servatam.³ And this moving notion of the new birth, Die Wiedergeburt, was applicable to history as well as to the spiritual life of the individual. A new world was waiting to be born; a new man was waiting to be born. This struggle for the new birth brought on the confusion of reason and of passion: of reason, because ideologies were uncertain; of passion, because personal

1 Vide: Konrad Burdach, Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus, Zwei Abhandlungen über die Grundlage moderner Bildung und Sprachkunst, Berlin 1926.

2 Vide: Ernst Benz, Ecclesia Spiritualis: Kirchenidee und Geschichtstheologie der Franziskanischen Reformation, Stuttgart 1934, passim; also Burdach, op. cit., p.19.

3 Burdach, op. cit., p.35

life and faith was insecure.

This uncertainty led to renewed activity. All aspects of life, all areas, were reexamined and reexplored. New vigour, new expansiveness, new adventuring entered into man's creative impulses. He was searching to remove his uncertainty and to secure his creative imagination.

Life was no longer taken for granted. All roads were followed to their endings. Exploration, geographical as well as spiritual, was in order. Life's phenomena were studied and minutely observed. Science was born. Even Erasmus and the humanist Melancthon searched the heavens for certain knowledge of man's future.¹ This is all significant for the typical medieval mind had not been capable of imagining the spiritual as spiritual for the God of medieval man was quite substantial and sin was a deficiency of substance and Grace was simply that missing substantial reality needed to make this deficient being complete. Duns Scotus, Occam, and finally Luther had said that penance -- the condition of Grace -- was a change of heart, not objective renewal of substantial reality.

Here then is a basic confusion: of reason, in the sterile medley of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism, mingling with the newly-found freedom to search out and explore; of passion, in the rediscovery of the vital rôle of Busskampf in religious living.

1 R. Seeberg, Dogmengeschichte, IV,I, p.10.

The Italian Renaissance had brought on the confusion of reason.

The two great coordinating ideas of the Middle Ages -- the ideas of a universal church and of a universal empire -- had disintegrated. Aristotelianism was dying. In the Renaissance an immediate attachment to Greek philosophy in non-Aristotelian forms became prevalent. The rediscovery of the thought of antiquity had brought new and startling ideas to the fore. System warred with system:

There were Platonists, who for the most part would better be called Neoplatonists; there were Aristotelians, who, in turn, were again divided into different groups, vigorously combating one another... There, too, were the reawakened older doctrines of Greek cosmology, of the Ionians and the Pythagoreans; the conception of Nature held by Democritus and Epicurus rose to new vigour. Skepticism and the mixed popular and philosophical eclecticism lived again. ¹

Indeed, the revival of the interest in classical literature which formed the heart of the Renaissance showed itself mainly in a strengthening of Platonism.

But Plato was not in this period the property of the humanists alone, for other scholars, even in the medieval period, had followed Plato's genius. This was an old tradition. Boethius, the thinkers of Charlemagne's time, John Scotus Erigena, were early examples. It is not without significance

¹ W. Windelband, A History of Philosophy, tr. Tufts, New York 1938, p.353.

that the centers of Platonic studies in northern France¹ and northern Germany were also the centers of Gothic art. The school at Chartres, prototype of the union of an increasing interest in the knowledge of nature and in humanistic studies, was also the center of Gothic architecture. So also the Platonists in northern Germany were searching for God in nature as well as creating, like Wolfram, the Parsifal legends. Witness Nicolas of Cusa.² Platonism -- often the metaphysics of mysticism -- had been the ground and basis of this German natural philosophy of the early Teutonic Renaissance. Through the spirit of Albertus Magnus Neoplatonism had come to Ulrich Engelberti of Strassburg. Dietrich of Freiburg was also Neoplatonist, and in Cologne, where a Gothic cathedral was being built, Platonic longings were expressed in the writings of the Carthusian, Dionysius Richel. Here too Eckhart had³ flourished.

But the Renaissance had also brought Florence with its Platonic Academy into being, the real center of Platonic studies in the fifteenth century.⁴ Just as medieval German Platonism had led to reform attempts within the church, so the Platonists of Florence were forerunners of reform too. Had

1 Peuckert, Pansophia -- Ein Versuch zur Geschichte der weissen und schwarzen Magie, Stuttgart 1936, pp.1-2. This work, the most extensive history of nature philosophy available, is a work which the present German government (1942) has banned.

2 Henry Bett, Nicolas of Cusa, London 1932, p.102 et passim.

3 Peuckert, Pansophia, p.8.

4 N.A. Robb, Neoplatonism in the Italian Renaissance, London 1935, passim.

not Laurentius Valla demonstrated the forgery of the Donatio Constantini? Did not Ficino seek a restitutio Christianismi? Indeed, in Florence Plato was the sign-post to Christ. But these men of the Florentine Academy were more followers of Plotinus than they were of Plato; their Platonism was garbed in the patterns of Neo-Platonism. Their God was essentially transcendent and absolutely One, the Unconditioned and the undivided. Duality first appeared in the manifested [^]____, the duality of thinking and being. And soul was product of spirit. The metaphysical architectonics of Florentine Platonism came from Plotinus, and that by many roads. Wedded to this Neoplatonism there was the idea of ecclesiastical reform, or rather, of the restoration of the purity of primitive Christianity,¹

The road by which these tendencies passed to Germany was a strange one, in fact, an indirect one. It came, peculiarly, through an interest in the Hebrew language. The brilliant young nobleman and scholar, Pico della Mirandola, had set up a natural philosophy on Neoplatonic lines which stood in direct opposition to medieval thought, especially astrology. He sought God in nature. This was magic (magia) -- nature philosophy. Pico sought the Creator in His creation, and his great textbook on natural philosophy was the opening chapters of the book of Genesis.² But Genesis was written in the Hebrew

1 Windelband, op. cit., pp. 357ff.

2 Boehme's greatest work was a commentary on Genesis. Cf. his Mysterium Magnum.

language, so, in order to search out the remote significances of his Creator*god, he studied the Hebrew language and the Hebrew literature, expounding Genesis. Thus he became one of the first students of the Old Testament because he believed that the opening Chapters of Genesis contained knowledge concerning the God hidden within nature. In addition he eagerly studied the Hebrew Cabbala, a system which, while pretending to be as old as Abraham, was certainly not much more ancient than the thirteenth century. The Cabbala itself was Neoplatonic in its metaphysical structure, and its intrinsic value from the modern point of view, or even from the point of view of Boehme, was less than the lavish attention paid it by the great minds of the Renaissance. But the interest in hebrew studies carried this Neoplatonic nature mysticism from Florence into Germany for Reuchlin's De rudimentis hebraicis (1505) and his De arte cabbalistica (1517) show the same strange union of Neoplatonism and Hebrew studies as do the works of Pico della Mirandola.

Neoplatonism, though, had been hiding in the dark corners of Germany for a long time. The black arts (schwarze Kunst) were extensively practised. These old Doctors also were interested in nature but not because they were looking for God in His creation. There was then in Germany Hermetical magic, as in Albertus Magnus's Speculum astronomiae. And then, of course, there was Doctor Faust! Cornelius Agrippa von

1 Peuckert, Pansophia, pp.vii ff.

Nettesheim in his works De Occulta Philosophia and De Incertitudine et Vanitate Scientiarum had shown this Neoplatonic searching for the source of being within nature. Other works appeared during the Sixteenth Century in which nature philosophy in Neoplatonic patterns was clearly evident. It remained for Theophrastus Paracelsus von Hohenheim to melt all these confused impulses together.¹ Paracelsus seems to have been a lone genius, a compassionate and devout physician of original ideas, a man whom Sebastian Franck called ein seltsam wunderparlich mann...² He was part humanist, part reformer, part original thinker, but mainly physician and healer. Speculative problems interested him because he wanted to heal and to heal he had to know the causes of disease. The books of the ancients were unsatisfactory: Hippocrates and Galen were insufficient. He sought a new master and he found one in nature. To heal, he believed, the physician must enter into his own heart, know the origin of disease within himself, and experience the cure within his own being. Nature breeds disease; nature heals disease. This is an empirical fact. But how do disease and life exist together? This is a speculative problem closely related to Jacob Boehme's mystically apprehended gnosis: In Jah und Nein bestehen alle Dinge. The physician must know, said Paracelsus,

¹ Vide: B.S. Freiherr von Walterhausen, Paracelsus am Eingang der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte, Leipzig 1935. Cf. also Peuckert, Pansophia, pp.202-250, and pp.501-509. Paracelsus's theological works are not well known.

² Chronica oder Zeitbuch, 1531.

both the origin of disease and the cure:

First, the physician must know heaven and earth in their material, species, and essence, and when he is educated into this, then he is one who may practise medicine, for in such experience, knowledge and art medicine begins. * 1

Here was another motive for the study of natural philosophy, a pragmatic one. The Florentine Platonists had sought God in nature; the old alchemists, like Faust, had sought to control nature by knowing her; now Paracelsus sought to heal disease by a thorough knowledge of nature.

But Paracelsus's Light of Nature brought more to the physician than was necessary for the healing arts, for the more the physician knew about the works of God the greater his faith became. And the greater his faith the more certain his salvation. Thus the old Thomistic and ultimately Neoplatonic Via Negativa -- the medieval idea that knowledge of God was obtained by a negation of the world -- ² was rejected for the belief that genuine knowledge of God could be found by an affirmation of his creation:

He who understands and knows much of nature's work is high in faith, for the Creator is his teacher. What sanctified Peter but Christ's works which made him believe? What (sanctifies) nature? The activity of the plants. The greatest one is he who knows, learns, and experiences natural wonders. Each believer should be such a philosopher, or have a neighbour ~~which~~ is such a one, so that he knows what maintains the health of his life... He shall know what it is that he eats and drinks, what he does and wears, what he may get for the prolongation of his life... He shall know all impressions so that he may know how it was possible to make something from nothing, as the firmament... he shall

1 Paracelsus in Paragranum, 2, 106. (In Vol. viii of Sämmtliche Werke, München 1924). Quoted by Peuckert, Pansophia, p. 207.

2 Peuckert, Pansophia, p. 210

know about the earth, what grows upon it, of the sea and the sky, so that he knows the Creator in all things... Then he is wealthy, for he knows Him through His works, and believes from them to Him. * 1

Here is an approach to the knowledge of God which was a far cry from the world-shunning asceticism of the medieval monks and nuns. The 'spiritual' life did not consist in a shunning of the world, of retreating into cloisters and caves, of denying the Creator and His creation. This new Weltanschauung began with man and in this the anthropocentric character of the philosophy of the Renaissance is clear. This stands in sharp contrast with the theocentric philosophies of the medieval period, although Aquinas did hold that man was the chief of God's creations, and that God could best be known, albeit negatively, from a knowledge of man. Thus instead of conceptions, the minds of the Renaissance demanded things,

instead of artificially constructed words, the language of the cultivated world; instead of subtle proofs and distinctions, a tasteful exposition that should speak to the imagination and heart of the living man. 2

Scripture and nature were the two sources of revelation: the one told about the macrocosm, the other of the microcosm. The old Neoplatonic traditions thus were followed, those tendencies to apprehend nature as a manifestation of spirit. The idea of God thus retained a point of unity for the diverging branches of science, the spiritual and the secular.³

Here then was a confusion of reason. Medieval solutions

1 Paracelsus in Prologus in die Bücher Meteorum, 8, 280f. Quoted by Feuckert, Pansophia, p.207.

2 Windelband, History of Philosophy, p.360.

3. Ibid., p.367.

no longer availed. The modern world, perhaps even the dual worlds of Descartes, was arriving. The universe itself was nothing else than the essential nature of God made creatural.

It was Martin Luther who released the flood-tide of confused passions.

And Luther had met mysticism face to face. In all its characteristic forms -- Dionysian, Augustinian, Bernardine, in Tauler, in the nameless Frankfurter who wrote the Theologia Germanica, in the devotio moderna, even in Staupitz -- he had found the real principle of religion: his own longing to meet his own God face to face within his own soul. This is mystical Innerlichkeit, a retreat into the depths of consciousness, a shutting of the eyes and of the mouth. Thus he had written

Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott!

Erfüll mit deiner Gnaden Gut,

Deiner Gläubigen- Hertz, Muth, und Sinn,

Dein brunstig Lieb enzünd in Ihnn.

This was an unusual note in religious longing. No longer did Luther wish to secure a berth for himself in the Celestial City. He now knew that no penny-pinching Johann Tetzel could control the comings and goings of the Holy Spirit in his own heart. Indulgences could neither help nor hinder the Holy Spirit from inflaming his heart, mind, and Spirit with Christian Love. This was the piety of German lay mysticism which

had worked in broad and ever-increasing circles during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. Especially had it infected the towns, creating in these new, non-feudal societies an independent and sometimes even anti-ecclesiastical lay Christianity, freed from hierarchies, the main characteristics of which were personal religion, Innerlichkeit, ethical regeneration of personality, religious improvement of the church where possible,¹ and social reform. German lay mysticism had leavened the lump, and Luther's break with the Roman Church was significant because it symbolized the coming of a new,² but perhaps only a revived, religious ideal.

Greek Christianity had remained conceptual. Its intelligible and transcendent Cosmos was the counter-image of the perceptible, outer world. Nowhere had the transcendent world met the visible, and Greek theology had been a supra-sensual stage-play of Trinity,³ of generation, and divine prowess. Roman Christianity, on the other hand, had been legal and regimental. The Roman spirit had not been able to conceive of the religious process in other terms than as an Imperium in which Spirit was mediated to the Christian by the rules of this God-ordained code. Fides Implicita had been viewed as loyal obedience of the citizen to this God-given and God-ordained Imperium.⁴ But with the Northern Renaissance

1 R. Seeberg, Dogmengeschichte, iii, i, 9.

2 Augustine's earnestness, his passionate longing for redemption, and his view of faith as internal, notwithstanding!

3 W. Dilthey, Weltanschauung und Analysis des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation, Leipzig, Berlin; 1923; p. 48.

4 Hoggman, Fides Implicita, IV, Leipzig, 1909, pp 1ff.

and the Reformation -- two closely related movements -- the old ideas of inner spirituality of Franciscan and German mysticism again made themselves felt. Sebastian Brandt had written in his Narrenschiff:

Gott hat uns dar~~mm~~ nicht geschaffen
 Dass wir Mönche werden oder Pfaffen.
 Und zumal, das wir uns sollten entschlagen¹
 Der Welt...

Ulrich von Hutten had said in one of his satires:

Mut, Landsleute, fefasset! Ermannen wir uns zu dem Glauben,²
 Das wir das göttliche Reich durch redliches Leben erwebben.

But far more important for Boehme, who certainly had not read these literateurs, was the widespread expression of this new universalistic theism and its new ideal of religious living in the popular art and popular poetry of the sixteenth century. The old pictorial representations of the Totentanz, which had pictured man as controlled by dark powers, now had been supplanted by Dürer, the Holbeins, the Cranachs, with their religious realism and their rejection of unspiritual myth.³ The sweet singing of the Minnesänger had infected German poetry with the allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs which described the personal relationship of the soul to God in erotic terms.⁴

1 Quoted by Ditley, op. cit., p.51.

2 Ibid.

3 H. Höhn, Deutsche Holzschnitte, Leipzig 1925.

4 Das Knaben Wunderhorn, 4 Vols., Berlin 1857; and Mystische Dichtung aus sieben Jahrhunderten, Leipzig 1925.

All this religious Innerlichkeit was symbolized dogmatically by the Lutheran battle-doctrine of justification by faith, sola fide; that is, justification through an inner grasping by the Word of God. This is a wholly mystical doctrine.¹ However much the doctrine of justification by faith appears as argumentative and controversial -- perhaps even apologetic -- it is in the main a protective doctrine for a still more central and precious idea: Paul's doctrine of the new being in Christ. Luther wanted nothing of the voluntary contempt of self which the classical mystics had assumed. Their hypocritical humility was in his eyes forced and assumed, masking the most dangerous of sins -- spiritual pride. As early as 1513 Luther had asserted that the torments of hell were nothing else than despair which man tastes in Busskampf.² But he had failed to state the obvious counterpart: that the idea of the felicity of Paradise was also a spiritual state, the joyous love of man to God and the security of the justified. Only in 1517, after he had met Tauler and the Theologia Germanica, did he assert that future blessedness was a present good and that man might partake of the new being in Christ Jesus here and now. It must be admitted, however, that in his De Libertate he still regarded ~~cathartic~~ asceticism of the monkish life as indispensable for the growth of the inner life.³ But for Luther faith implied no self-assumed and

1 Cf. Erich Seeberg, Christus Wirklichkeit und Urbild, Stuttgart 1937.

2 H. Boehmer, Luther in the Light of Modern Research, London 1931, p.75.

3. Ibid., p.77.

'proud' humility, but resignation, surrender, repentance. Faith makes the sufferings of Christ available for us and faith is the forerunner of Busskampf. In Busskampf God is justified in us -- and here Luther's central dialectical principle comes to light, namely, that through the justification of God in us our justification in God takes place.¹ This is the mystical core of Luther's doctrine of justification by faith; that the act of faith which implied resignation, repentance, and genuine humility, carries with it the justification of both God and man. Thus with Luther, as with Eckhart and the older German mystics, the one religious act of faith unfolds itself in a twofold manner: as the justification of man by God, and as God's own justification to man.

Obviously, all this implies a theory of the work of Christ. For if we and God are justified by faith, then Christ's work on the cross was not satisfaction, but struggle and victory.² Luther's idea of the atonement formed an organic whole with the remainder of his doctrine. His view of the work of Christ as Busskampf -- as the struggle against death, is not hidden in his least accessible works, but it is present in his catechisms and in his hymns. It is Luther's most accessible idea. Thus he wrote:

Mitten wir im Leben sind,

Mit dem Tod umfassen

¹ Erich Seeberg, op. cit., p. 148.

² G. Aulen, Christus Victor, London 1940, p.117.

Wo sollen wir dann fliehen hin,
 Das wir Gnad erlangen?
 Zu dir Herr Christ alleine.
 Das ist nun der Held im Streit,
 Zu dem wir fliehen müssen,
 Welcher ist unser König,
 Jesus Christus.¹

Or again:

Christus lag in Todes-Banden,
 Für unser Sünd gegeben,
 Der ist wieder erstanden,
 Und hat uns bracht das Leben:
 Dess wir sollen fröhlich seyn,
 Gott loben und dankbar seyn,
 Und singen Halleluja, Halleluja.

Luther's new religious ideal, his entire theological motivation, finds its clear ² summary in his hymns and in his Shorter Catechism. These works of Luther's Boehme knew and he was also fully aware of the reformer's joyful consciousness of redemption, of his full understanding of the meaning of salvation, of his justification, of his faith. Behind all of Luther's theologizing there was his impassioned faith, for he was more than anything a devout soul, a religious man, a person who had met his own saviour face to face. And from

1 Boehme quotes this hymn in Aurora, xiv, 153. It is Luther's translation of Notker's Latin. During the 17th Century it was supposed to have magical qualities.

2 Cf. especially Luther's hymn beginning, Nun freut euch lieben Christen gemein!

Luther's religious ideal there came a new faith, indeed even a new form of faith, easily able to confuse men's passions -- a faith mystical in that Christ again dwelt within the human heart.

These Lutheran hymns, in which the reformer's religious ideals were contained, were included in an interesting hymnal printed by Georg Rhambaw in Görlitz in 1611, and used in the¹ local church: Harmoniae Ecclesiae et Scholae Gorlicensis...

Here then was the basic confusion of reason and passion in the age in which Boehme was born. And in this confusion Jacob Boehme shared.

¹ This edition became the basis of the later Brealsu hymnal.

II. BOEHME'S LIFE: 1575-1600

1

Jacob Boehme was born in the Upper Lausatian village of Old Seidenberg, on the side of a mountain, near to the Bohemian border, ² on or immediately before, 24 April 1575.

He was the fourth child of Jacob Boehme, who died in 1618, and his second wife, Ursula, whose maiden name is ³ unknown. His parents were solid, perhaps even well-to-do ⁴ farmers, 'of the good German stamp' as Franckenberg relates, ⁵ for in spite of the name's obvious Slavic connotations, the family seems to have been natively German. Pure German groups

1 Vide Appendix Two for collation of existing biographical materials. The name is variously spelt even in the contemporary records: Böhm, Böhme, Bheme, Beme, Byme, Bohem, Böhmer, Bemann, etc. German writers have adopted J-a-k-o-b B-ö-h-m-e, but not universally. Seventeenth Century British writers used B-e-h-m-e-n. The British Museum Catalogue of Printed Books prefers J-a-c-o-b- B-o-e-h-m-e. This is standard in modern English.

2 The date is derived: a) the year, from Franckenberg's De Vita et Scriptis, #1, and also by calculating back from the year of his death when according to the Kober account, J.B. was 49 years old; b) the day and month, from the implication in the Görlitzer Bürgerbuch, 24 April 1599, the shoemaker's birthday. Since there is a possibility that this insertion may have been made a day or two after the event, and so dated, the actual day of his birth is not sure. Hence 'on or before'. The Görlitz church records do not survive; those of the Seidenberg church are non-existent.

3 Richard Jecht, Jakob Böhme..., p.16. Cf Bibliography Two for list of all works about Boehme.

4 Jecht lists the property holdings of the Boehme family in Old Seidenberg, op. cit., p. 16.

5 Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #2.

had lived beside the Czech and Moravian peoples in the Lausitz since the beginning of the Thirteenth Century and the Boehme¹ family was already in Seidenberg in the Fifteenth Century.

The philosopher's great-grandfather was also named Jacob. He had been a farmer in Old Seidenberg as late as 1558, a short seventeen years before the philosopher's birth. His sons were² Michael, Abdreas, Ambrosius, and Georg.

Ambrosius inherited the family lands and became well-established in the community. He was an elder in the Lutheran church and assistant judge (Gerichtsschöppe) in the local court.³ Ambrosius Boehme, or as the Mundart has it, Bruse, sired four sons and three daughters: Hans, Martin, Ambrosius, Anna, Margaretha, Jakob, and Dorothea. He died in 1563, thirteen years before his famous grandson was born and his lands were passed on to his youngest son, Jacob, according to local custom.

Jacob Boehme, father of the philosopher, bought the rights to the land from the other heirs, his brothers and sisters, for the sum of 600 marks at Martinmas, 1563.⁴ Like his father before him he was an elder in the Lutheran Church and associate judge⁵ in the local courts. He was twice married: his first wife bore

1 The oldest reference to the Boehme name in the Seidenberg area appears 23 October 1416 when Hans Behme is mentioned in the Görlitz Ratsarchiv, viz: Hannus Behme von Alden Seidenberg resignavit 6 fert, circa omnia bona tamquam, omni jure proxima, Lichtenberginna der cromerin tamquam, omni jure peracto. In Jecht, op. cit., p.19. This proves that Boehmes were not serfs in this period.

2 Jecht, op. cit., p.16.

3 Fechner, Sketch of the Life of Jacob Boehme, (Printed in translation as the Introduction to the Earle translation of Gnad.), p.xiv.

4 Jecht, op. cit., p. 16.

5 Fechner, op. cit., p. xiv.

him five children, among them the philosopher; and his second wife bore him three daughters. The first wife died in 1611; the second wife before 1634. Upon the father's death in 1618 the youngest son, Michael, brother of the philosopher, inherited the farm, acquiring the shares from his brothers and sisters for 600 marks.¹ There is an interesting but unconfirmed report² that Jacob Boehme, the father, has mystical inclinations.

Of the philosopher's boyhood little is known. He was next to the youngest child of a medium-sized German farming family. He was certainly not the son of a peasant, nor was he of peasant stock. Since Jacob had a younger brother he was not destined to inherit the family lands; furthermore, there is little doubt that he was a weak and sickly child, small of stature and of under-developed physique. Franckenberg relates an interesting but obviously hagiographical story about the young philosopher:

Being now grown up a pretty big lad, he, in company with some other boys of the same village, was obliged to tend the cattle in the field; and in this way to be serviceable, under due subjection, to his parents. 3

So much seems obvious, for young Boehme undoubtedly helped with the chores on the Boehme farm. But Franckenberg now says that

During the time of his being a herd-boy, he met with a curious and remarkable occurrence. Having one day, about noon, been rambling to a great distance from the other lads, and climbing up alone by himself on an adjacent

1 Fechner, op. cit., p.xiv.

2 Fechner suggests the father's mystical inclinations. And this is not improbable for the Lausitz was full of such things. The original source probably is Colberg, Das Hermetisch-Platonisch Christenthum, Leipzig 1710, p. 211.

3 Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #3.

Mountain, called Landeskrone; being arrived at the summit (the story I have heard from his own mouth and he has pointed to me the place) he espied amongst the great red stones a kind of aperture or entrance, overgrown with bushes, and enclosed in a manner not much unlike a door-case or passage. This, in his simplicity, he penetrated into, and there descried a large portable vessel, or wooden pannier, full of money, the sight of which set him into a shudder. This also prevented him meddling with any of the money, and put him upon making the very best of his way out again, without taking so much as a single piece along with him. And what is very remarkable, tho' he had frequently climbed up to the same place afterwards, in company with other hard-boys, yet he could never hit upon this aperture again. 1

Franckenberg professed to see in this incident an

emblematic omen, or presage of his future spiritual admission to the sight of the hidden Treasury of Wisdom and mysteries of God and nature. 2

A pretty story, certainly, but of unconvincing symbolism. The Landeskrone lies a good eight English miles from Seidenberg, a rather long journey for a herd-boy, although it is true that the farm boys of Lausatia wandered long distances while grazing their herds and from the point of view of farming custom it is not improbable.

Jacob Boehme's parents, 'having observed that the son of theirs gave proof of an excellent, good, and sprightly genius, kept him to school, where, together with daily prayers and good behaviour, both at table and in his family, he learned to read tolerably well and a little writing.'³ Between 1580 and 1590 the Seidenberg Stadtschule was taught by Johann Leder of Schneidsburg, who is said to have been an excellent master, and,

1 Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #4.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., #6.

as was both law and custom, instruction was grounded in Scripture, especially in the Testament, and in Luther's Kleiner Katechismus.¹ In addition to his teaching duties, Leder was Kantor or Vorsinger in the associated congregation.² Boehme remained in school until his fourteenth year, learning to read, write, cipher, and a few scraps of Latin. There is slim possibility that Boehme may have attended school in Old Seidenberg, although the existence of a school in Old Seidenberg during this period has not been established.³

Boehme's family was prominent in the local life, for the philosopher's father was a leader in his community.⁴ Jacob Boehme the elder was Kirchenvater in the Seidenberg church, and it is therefore quite likely that young Jacob attended services and catechetical instruction in the village church. This would be Jacob Boehme's first contact with organized religion.

Protected by noblemen favourable to the Reformation, the Seidenberg church, like those in the neighbouring villages, was thoroughly Protestant.⁵ Its first Protestant Pastor had been Johann Schneider, whose ministry began in 1542,⁶ and probably continued into the lifetime of Boehme's father. In 1535 the Seidenberg lands passed into the hands of Friedrich, Freiherr von Räder, an ardent Protestant,⁷ who shared the management

1 Fechner, op. cit., p.xiv.

2 Neumann, Geschichte von Görlitz, Görlitz 1850, p.367.

3 Jecht, op. cit., p.20.

4 Neumann, op. cit., p.367.

5 The Reformation Graf had been Matthias Bieberstein, whose two sons had been sons at Wittenberg when Luther nailed his theses to the Door. Cf. Müller, Versuch einer Oberlautzischen Reformations Geschichte, Görlitz 1701, p, 353ff.

6 Müller, op. cit., p.560.

7 Ibid., p.562.

of political and ecclesiastical affairs with his brothers until 1591, when he became sole owner himself. In this year, probably at the instigation of the Prince Elector, he began to reform the ecclesiastical affairs in the congregation under his jurisdiction. He summoned his ministers to Friedhof, his seat, and declared to them that he desired the remnants of pagan superstition purged from the worship of his congregations. He insisted that preaching be grounded on the Prophets, on the Apostles, on the Symbolic documents, and on the Augsburg Confession. He formulated a fixed form of purified worship for use in the congregation, and he appointed Martin Nüssler, a local pastor, Superintendent of the district.¹

During these years Jacob Boehme, the father, was elder in the Seidenberg congregation for his name appears among the tutores et nutrices ecclesiae.² It is probable that these local reforms were the subject of conversations in the Boehme household. It is not far fetched to assume that young Jacob Boehme was interested in these reforms. Were more known about this reforming Freiherr von Räder and about the local ministers the full significance of this episode for Boehme's development might be gauged.³

Jacob Boehme the philosopher was in Seidenberg at this time, for already in 1589 his father had taken him to the shoemaker in the village to learn cobbling. According to the

1 Müller, op. cit., p. 563.

2 Jecht, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

3 In 1624 the Seidenberg church was again Catholic.
Cf. Müller, op. cit., p. 563.

statute of the cobbler's guild the period of apprenticeship was then, as it is now, three years. It may be assumed then that Jacob Boehme served out his normal period of apprenticeship, beginning his journeyman travels in 1592. Franckenberg spins a smart yarn about these apprentice days:

It fell out that on a certain time during his apprenticeship a stranger, plain and mean of dress, but otherwise of a good and respectable presence, comes to his shop, and asks to buy a pair of shoes; but as neither Master nor Mistress were within, he, Jacob Boehme, the apprentice boy, would not venture to sell them, till the stranger, with much importunity, insisted upon his letting him have them; now, then, he, having more of a mind to put the buyer off than to sell the shoes, set a somewhat enormous price upon them. The man, however, paid down the money demanded without the least demur or objection, and, taking up the shoes, went away. But being got at some distance from the shop, and then stopping short, he called out with an audible and serious tone of voice: 'Jacob, come out hither to me'. An address like this from a person unknown, and made by his Christian name too, startled the boy; but, upon recovering himself again, he got up and went into the street to him. The man, then, whose mein was serious and loving, with sparkling eyes, taking him by the right hand, and looking him full in the face, said: 'Jacob, thou art little, but thou shalt become great, and a man so different from the common cast, that thou shalt be the wonder of the world. Be therefore a good lad; fear God, and reverence His Word. Let it especially be thy delight to read the Holy Scriptures, wherein thou art furnished with comfort and instruction; for thou shalt be obliged to suffer a great deal of affliction, poverty, and persecution also; nevertheless, be thou of good comfort, and firmly persevere, for God loveth thee, and he is gracious unto thee.' Upon which the man, after squeezing him by the hand and looking him full in the face, went of course his way. 1

This is not an altogether innocent creation on the part of Franckenberg for the instruction which the stranger gave to Boehme was calculated to keep him from associating himself

1 Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #5, #9.

with the heretical groups then prevalent. Franckenberg suggests that this incident led Boehme to renewed seriousness¹ and attention to his affairs.

The extent and exact itinerary of Boehme's journeyman travels is not known. He wandered, though, in a land full of grave tensions and religious unrest. The bitter, impassioned struggles of the Reformation had not yet achieved final solution, and the Peasant's Revolt, although suppressed with needled~~ed~~,
ruthlessness, had only served to increase the discontent. The Bundschuh -- and Boehme was learning how to make shoes -- was still the living symbol of Jacquerie and Apocolypsis. The Taborites and Adamites of Bohemia, holding to their advanced social, economic, and religious ideas, had spread their beliefs westward into Swabia and the Oberpfaltz and northward into Saxony and Lausatia. The countryside through which Boehme wandered was alive with groups holding to the ideas of the 'Evangelical Brethren'. The destruction of the Swabian League at Franckenhause, 25 May 1525, had not quenched but merely postponed the peasant's hope of liberation. Restless, expectant, certain of the final alteration of ecclesiastical abuses, the peasants were waiting in sullen silence for their deliverer, perhaps another Hans Boehme!

These hard and trying socio-political conditions bred long-faced Jeremiahs who proclaimed from one end of Germany to the other the approaching day of judgment. With the decline

1 Franckenberg, op. cit., #7.

of medieval economic stabilizations, chiliastic dreams took shape at two ends of Germany -- in the Rhineland and in Silesia.¹ Landowners were hated for their gourmandizing, carousing, dissipating, playboying! The peasants toiled, hungered, and spun their fervent dreams of liberation. The pent-up apocalyptic of the dispossessed was molded into one great Wiedergeburt -- an ultimately decisive judgment day. Near the end of the Fifteenth Century a Bavarian farmhand went through the land, claiming a divine vision. Michael Niedermayer predicted the end of the world, and in Sagan he told how on the day following Corpus Christi, 1575, the Lord had commanded him to preach repentance.² And the people believed. In Harpersdorf, a Schwenkfeldian village, another prophet arose to ~~foretell~~³ the end. At Hirschberg in the Riesengebirge two prophets arose, Hans Georg Rischmann and Hans Neuchel, basing their prognostications on Johannine and Matthean apocalypses.⁴ Rischmann foretold famine, war, divine judgment,⁵ the first two of which came true during the Thirty Years War. And then in Görlitz there appeared the strange travelling tanner, Christoph (Stoffel) Kotter, who saw angels as he trudged along.⁶ His visions were frequent and he foretold the destruction of Babel, the establishment of the true church, and the soon-to-come Jüngste Tag.⁷

1 Peuckert, Leben, p.1. Cf. also Corrodi, Kritische Geschichte des Chiliasmus, Franckfurt, 1781-1788.

2 Peuckert, Leben, p.3.

3 Peuckert, Die Rosenkreutzer, Jena 1928, p. 246ff.

4 Hensel, Beschreibung der Stadt Hirschberg, 1799, p.223ff.

5 Peuckert, Schlesische Sagen, Leipzig 1924, p. 72ff.

6 B. 1583-d.1647. Cf. Zwey wunder Tractätlein, 1732

7 Arnold, Kirchen u. ketzer Hist., passim.

In addition to this rampant prophetism, Upper Lausatia was at this time the scene of religious conflicts between established and non-established religions. The strife was so intense that Rudolf of Saxony declared a religious purge in 1592, the same year that Boehme's journeyman travels began.¹

Franckenberg says that during these journeyman years Jacob Boehme 'experienced' his first mystical illumination. but there is no evidence in Boehme's own writings to support this statement. The account of this illumination, along with the accounts of the others, is found in Franckenberg's De Vita et Scriptis, and many writers have accepted these accounts as trustworthy. Although each account contains a modicum of truth, they can all be rejected because Boehme's own records are better.

The first illumination is thus described:

Whereas now, Jacob Behmen... had, in all humility and simplicity, walked from his very youth up in the fear of God, and had taken peculiar pleasure in attending sermons; he, in the process of time, through the conciliatory promise of Our Saviour, Luke xi, 13: 'Your heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him', was awakened in his own heart, and thro' the multiplicity of controversy and scholastic wrangling about religion, which he never could take in, or tell what to make of, he set himself upon fervently and incessantly praying, seeking, and knocking, until, being at that time with his Master on his travels, he, thro' the Father's drawings in the Son, was in Spirit, translated into the Holy Sabbath and glorious day of rest of the soul; and thus of consequence had his request granted him here (to use the words of his own confession) 'surrounded with the divine light for the space of seven days successively', he stood possessed of the highest beatific vision of God, and in the ecstatic joys of His Kingdom. 2

1 Peuckert, Leben, p. 14.

2 De Vita et Scriptis, # 7.

This passage cannot be found in any of Boehme's 'Confessions', although it is claimed that this made a deep and lasting impression upon the young journeyman, arousing speculative doubts and producing an abiding melancholy.

That Boehme was melancholy in temperment, that he was by nature serious and perhaps even stern, is evident from nearly every page that he wrote. Franckenberg further tells of another unusual incident which took place during Boehme's journeyman days. He

laid aside the trifling lusts of foolish youth, and kept constantly to his church, together with reading the Holy Bible, a regular attendance upon the Word preached, and participation in the Holy Sacraments, a zeal of God moved him so that he was not able either to bear, or to endure foolish conversation and least of all blasphemous expressions and curses: nay, he could not refrain from checking and rebuking them in his own Master with whom he now worked as journeyman. Moreover, his love to genuine Godliness and Virtue made him addict himself to a modest and retired life, bidding adieu to and shaking off all wantonness and bad company, which being a turn of course drew ridicule and reproach upon him; and at length he was, by the very Master he now wrought with, (unable to brook a family prophet like this) discharged and set about his business elsewhere. ¹

This incident seems to have some truth for Boehme was spiritually sensitive, though he does not seem to have been a meddling Puritan.

Thus towards the end of the Sixteenth Century, probably already in 1595 or 1596, Jacob Boehme, having finished his journeyman service, made his way into the busy town of Görlitz, there to pursue his handicraft and maintain himself 'with the labour of his hands and the sweat of his brow'. ² Görlitz was

¹ Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #10.

² Ibid., as in Sparrow's Brief Account.

an important city in Eastern Germany, one of the few German towns which had possessed an indigenous culture in the Middle Ages.¹ It was a non-feudal town, wholly typical of the new centers which were arising on the debris of medieval social organization. Architecturally it was mainly baroque, thus expressing in outward form the period of its greatest prosperity. It was the home of rich and powerful merchant princes like Heorg Emmerich and Johannes Haas -- men, who, while not as famous and powerful as the Fugger Brothers of Augsburg, were nevertheless influential enough to be known as the 'Kings of Görlitz'.²

As a mercantile city of increasing importance Görlitz was the center of new and perhaps even dangerous religious ideologies. New philosophical and religious movements were evident and the environment which the young shoemaker entered into was conducive to speculative activity.³

The Lutheran Reformation had come quietly to Görlitz between 1520 and 1530, though final victory for the Protestants was delayed until 1550. The first Lutheran pastor of Görlitz had been the quiet, industrious, and temperate Martin Faber, the successor to the boisterous, drunken Johann Boehme, who was, according to the records, ein Zänker, und dem Rath

1 Jecht, op. cit., p.84.

2 For a list of the Chronicles and sources of Görlitz history, Cf. Jecht, Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Görlitz, Görlitz, 1909.

3 F. G. Müller, Versuch einer Oberlautzischen Reformations Geschichte, p. 318.

¹
viel zu schaffen machte, the instigator of many Bierstreiten.
 Lutheran tracts were widely circulated in Görlitz, sent home
 by the numerous young men who were studying at Wittenberg
 and ²Leipzig. 11 April 1518, the Sunday after Easter, Martin
 Faber announced in the church that a reform of religious pract-
 ises would be made, ³ and after Faber's death in 1520 a line of
 Lutheran pastors succeeded in the Görlitz pulpit, all of them
 zealous in the new reform: Franziskus Rupertus, Melchoir Rüdel,
 and Johannea Press. ⁴ All were loyal followers of Luther and
 the mercantile town of Görlitz was definitely won for the Luth-
 eran cause by the further sacrificial activities of the Lutheran
 pastors during the Pest of 1521. ⁵

Schwenkfeldians were in Görlitz probably as early as 1520.
 Small in number, their group was nevertheless influential, con-
 sisting of three related families: the Schützes, the Hiffmanns,
 and the Enders. ⁶ Caspar Schwenkfeldt -- the beloved 'C.S.' --
 had himself been a guest in the Schütz home in Görlitz between
 1527 and 1529. Here the congregation met, Franz Leidel being
 their pastor circa 1544. The neighbouring nobility, tied by
 marriage to these patrician families of the town, was also
 associated with this group. ⁷

In 1560 the Görlitz preachers had refused a Christian
 burial to Schützes daughter, Ursula, wife of Hans Hoffmann,

1 Müller, op. cit., p.318.

2 Neumann, Geschichte von Görlitz, p. 275.

3 Müller, op. cit., p.318.

4 Ibid., pp. 324-328.

5 Ibid., pp. 326-327.

6 Jecht, Jakob Böhme, p. 86.

7 Ibid., p.86.

patrician and Lord of Hennersdorf. The bell-ringer in the Cathedral was not allowed to toll her passing, but the municipal fathers intervened, even ~~over~~ the protestations of the pastor, D. Wirthwein. In 1565 and 1566 the Görlitz Senate forbade booksellers to trade in Schwenkfeldian books,¹ and the Schwenkfeldians were further discomfited when the Senate, having published a list of 'heretical' families, ordered them to become converted or else to accept banishment. Numerous 'conversions' followed and even old Sebastian Schütze himself received Lutheran absolution and Communion on his deathbed in 1569.² When Georg Hoffmann died in 1575 the Görlitz preachers refused to preach the eulogy or to accompany his corpse to the Kirchenhof. Once more the magistrates intervened, ordering the bells tolled,³ and the school children to march in the funeral procession. Michael Ender von Sercha, Hoffmann's brother-in-law and later Boehme's patron, carried the complaints to the Emperor himself, who, being Catholic,⁴ naturally sides with the Schwenkfeldians. Out on the land the Lausatian nobility were largely Schwenkfeldian, loyal to the pious nobleman, one of their own class.⁵ Pastor Christian Mohr

¹ Ex memorabili Domini Eliae Metlzeri, Senat Görlitz, Anno 1565; Quoted by Jecht, Jakob Böhme, p. 61.

² Koyré, La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme, p.4.

³ Ibid.,

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The Schwenkfeldian nobility were the following: Carl von Ender von Leopoldshain, Sercha, und Hennersdorf; his brother Michael von Ender von Fürstenau-Zödel; Hans von Salza, Herr von Zwickau und Lomnitz; David von Schweinitz und von Schweinhaus. Cf. G. Koffmann, Geschichte der Religionsbewegungen in Schlesien, Brealsu, 1880. Other materials can be found, both in ms and in printed form in the rich Schwenkfeldian Historical Library, Pennsburg, Pennsylvania.

of Seidenberg, Boehme's native village, told of a Schwenkfeldian in his church who, in 1608, had not received the Lord's Supper for twenty-nine years.¹

Anabaptists were in Silesia and Lausatia very early. In 1525 they were banished from Franckenstein and in 1529 from Schweidnitz.² In 1539 a Johann Ender was preaching Thomas Münzer's doctrines in and about Görlitz. He had many followers, especially on the Görlitzer Meide.³ They were ruthlessly suppressed in the same year. In 1549 the Görlitz Senate forbade further Anabaptist controbersies: several 'Heretical' rebaptizers were burned, others were banished.⁴ In 1565 a Meister David married a tailor's daughter in Görlitz and then, misguidedly,⁵ became an Anabaptist.

Since Görlitz was a mercantile town it naturally became a center of the dreaded Crypto-Calvinism. The first three Rectors of the Gymnasium Augustum had been students of Melancthon's at Wittenberg.⁶ In 1563 Primarius Rauch had been banished from Görlitz for preaching a Calvinist sermon.⁷ In 1591, after the death of the Prince Elector, the Phillipists and Crypto-Calvinists were chased from Saxony,⁸ and Wittenberg was cleansed of the heterodox.⁹ In the same year both the Catholics and the Luther- and took the offensive against Calvinists. In Bautzen Pastor

1 Kanuthe Ms: Historia Crypt. in Lausit. sup Ms.

2 Peuckert, Die Rosenkreutzer, p.243.

3 Jecht, Böhme, p.35.

4 Ibid.

5 Ex memoribili Domini Meltzeri Senat. Görlitz Anno 1665.

6 Jecht, op.cit., p.86.

7 Koyré, op.cit., p.5.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

Wachshamer aroused the faithful against the Calvinists who were led by a man named Nestlein.¹ The parties battled in the streets. Broadsides appeared. The authorities were perturbed. During Boehme's lifetime the contentions between the Lutherans and the Calvinists were so intense that no Görlitz citizen trusted his neighbour.² Görlitz sent a delegation to the Prince to protest the orthodoxy of the City. On this delegation were Burgomaster Scultetus, Johann Weiss,³ Elias Dietrich, Martin Chilius and Gregory Richter. Philipism found numerous adherents in Eastern Germany. Breslau held firmly to the Corpus Philipicum, and in Brieg and Liegnitz these writings were used as texts as late as 1601.⁴ Martin Moller, the well-known and devout Pastor Primarius in Görlitz, was engaged in a controversy⁵ with Solomon Gessner, Wittenberg champion of orthodoxy. Boehme himself was drawn into these Crypto-Calvinistic discussions for three of his works were written to help solve some of the problems germane to these disputes. At the beginning of the Bohemian war (1619) Graf Johann Christian of Brieg openly espoused⁶ Calvinism and Breslau was permitted the Reformed form of worship.

In addition to being the center of religious groups of many kinds, Görlitz was also the home of men of learning, of humanists, scholars, and physicians. Ever since 1550 the sons of

1 Koyré, op. cit., p.5.

2 Arnold, Kirchen u ketzer hist., II,xvii, xviii,5)

3 Koyré, op. cit., p.5. Richter was at this time in the Schulcolleg.

4 Moeller, History of the Christian Church, New York 1902, iv, p.311.

5 Infra., 40.

6 Moeller, op. cit., p.311.

Görlitz had gone to Basel, as well as to Wittenberg and Leipzig, to study, and Basel was ~~was~~ during the Sixteenth century the center of the new northern humanism, the heart of Paracelsian studies. Chief among these sons of Görlitz who had studied in Basel was the well-known Bartholomäus Scultetus¹ (Schultze), who was the revered Burgomaster from 1592 to 1614. He had been co-editor with Huser of the Works of Paracelsus which had been published in Cologne during the years 1589 and 1590.² In addition to Scultetus Dr Tobias Kober, Dr Michael Kurtz, among others, had studied medicine in the Paracelsian traditions.³

To a city of such significance Jacob Boehme made his way sometime near the end of the Sixteenth Century.

Of Boehme's early years in Görlitz little is known. If he began his apprenticeship at the age of fourteen years, then when he became 20, that is in 1595, he was free to set up business for himself. But few young shoemakers then were able to begin their own shops, so it may be assumed that in 1595 young Jacob Boehme began to work in the shop of a Görlitz shoemaker, probably that of Valentin Lange. He seems to have worked hard, for on 24 April 1599 he bought a shoemaker's bench and business from

1 Vide: Neumann, Deschichte von Görlitz, p.361. Scultetus was an astronomer of note, a friend of Tycho Bache, and editor of the Diarium Humanitatis Christi which was published at Frankfurt-an-der-Oder in 1600. Cf. M. Lipensius, Bibliotheca Realis Theologica, Frankfurt 1685, I, 517b.

2 Jecht, Böhme, p.60;

3 Ibid., p.84.

Valentin Lange, the brother-in-law of his selected bride-to-be. He paid 240 marks for the bench.¹ On 10 May of the same year he became a citizen of the City of Görlitz and the husband of Catharina Kuntzschmann, daughter of a Görlitz² butcher. For these privileges he paid Görlitz three crowns. Catharina's mother was born a Bartsch, and one of her uncles was the influential butcher, Elias Bartsch, who was an alderman (Ratsverwandter) between 1604 and 1616. Catharina had three brothers and a sister Sarah, the wife of the Valentine Lange from whom Jacob Boehme had bought his shoemaker's bench. Since the statute of the Guild of Shoemakers of 23 March 1573 recorded Wenn er (the journeyman) Meister worden, derselb soll inner halben Jahren sich verehlichen, it may be assumed that sometime within half-a-year before his marriage, Jacob Boehme had become a Master shoemaker.³ His wife seems to have brought him a substantial dowry for 29 August 1599 he bought a house in the⁴ Rabengasse from Paul Adam for 300 marks. From this marriage of Jacob Boehme and Catharina Kuntzschmann there was the following issue: Jacob, baptized in the St. Peter's and St. Paul's Church,⁵ 27 January, 1600; Michael, who was baptized 8 January

1 Görlitzer Kaufbuch, 1598f. Bl.77. Jecht, Böhme, p.10.

2 Görlitzer Traubuch, 10 May 1599. This entry in the was written by Burgomaster Scultetus, and reads: Jacob Bohem getraut mit Junkfrau Catharina Hanns Kuntzschmanns Tochter und zahlte ³ Kneutzer. Cf. Jecht, op. cit., p.14.

³ Koyré, op. cit., p.11; Peuckert, Leben, 19; Jecht, op. cit., p.22.

4 Görlitzer Kaufbuch, 1598ff. Bl.77. Cf. Jecht, op.cit., p.10.

6 Görlitzer Kirchenbuch, #29, 1600, 29 Januar: Joachim Beme ein Sohn, Jakob, Die Paten: Georg Müller, Hans Heine, Jungfrau Elisabeth, Hanns Barthels Tochter. Jacob was still living in February 1624 when he took communion with his parents and brother Tobias. He was a shoemaker.

¹1602 ; Tobias, baptized 11 September 1603;² and der kleine Elias who was a bit late in arriving and was baptized on 14 September 1611.³ Jacob and Catharina Boehme had no daughters. The two Boehme girls whose baptisms are recorded in the church records for this period were the children of another Jacob Boehme, a tanner by trade, who was a contemporary citizen of the⁴ Görlitz shoemaker.

Christian Knauthe, pastor of Friedshof near Görlitz, (d. 1784) has left an important reference concerning Jacob Boehme's early years in the town of Görlitz.⁵ In the manuscript⁶ which Knauthe compiled concerning the religious conditions of the Lausitz during Boehme's age, he says that a Martin Moller came to Görlitz as Pastor Primarius in 1600, that there followed many conversions, that among the people thus 'awakened' there was Jacob Boehme, who, because of his 'awakened' condition associated

¹ Görlitzer Kirchenbuch, Ibid., 18 January 1602: Jakob Bheme ein Sohn Michel. Die Paten: George Steinkirche, Merten Getlinck, Frau Dorothea die Lenert Reslerin. Of these, Merten Getlinck bought Boehme's house upon the latter's death in 1624, and was probably the apprentice in Boehme's shop. Michel Boehme seems to have died young, but not before he was seven or eight. Since his death is not recorded in the Kirchenbuch it seems certain that he was a victim of the plague.

² Görlitzer Kirchenbuch, 11 Sept 1603. Tobias was baptized in the presence of Merten Klesel, Peter Langhaus, and Frau Catharina, wife of Hans Hesler. Tobias grew to full manhood and was present at his father's death in 1624. He was a shoemaker.

³ Görlitzer Kirchenbuch, Ibid., 9 September 1603. Jakob Böhme ein Sohn Elias, Die Patten: Friedrich Grosche, Peter Peschmann, Frau Anna Merten Rosinen. Elias was still living in 1624, for his father mentions him in a letter from Dresden. Epist., lxi, 10. He died in the plague of 1625 at the age of 14 years and 2 months.

⁴ Jecht, Böhme, p. 18.

⁵ This Knauthe reference may be dependent upon the reference in the 1682 or 1715 editions of Boehme's works.

⁶ Historia Cryptocalvinismi in Lausat. sup. The ms is in the Archives in Görlitz, Annales, 255f.

with like-minded people in the conventicles which Moller had established.¹ But the Knauthe Ms is not alone in suggesting Moller's influence upon Boehme, for Glusing, the editor of the 1715 edition of Boehme's works also says that Mertin Moller, the pastor of St Peter's and St Paul's church, a pious man, was the instrument (Werkzeug) which aroused the shoemaker's dormant gifts.²

It was during these years around 1600 that Jacob Boehme experienced what Franckenberg calls his 'second illumination'. The shoemaker's spirit undoubtedly had been stirred by the devout Moller, for

he was in the beginning of the 17th Century, viz., 1600, being in the 26th year of his age, enraptured with the astral spirit of his soul by means of an instantaneous glance of the eye, cast upon a bright pewter dish (being the lovely shine or aspect) introduced into the innermost ground or center of the recondite of hidden nature.³

The pewter dish is most likely Franckenberg's invention for the probability is that it was Moller who stimulated Boehme's spirit.

In the light of what is known concerning Moller, one of the earliest of the Pietists, he becomes the first definite influence upon the spirit of Jacob Boehme.

Martin Moller was born at Liessnitz in 1547, the son of a mason. He attended school at Wittenberg and the gymnasium at Görlitz but poverty prevented him from hearing lectures at a University. This lack of university training did not prevent him from being appointed Cantor at Löwenberg in 1568 and in April

00000000000000000000-----
¹ Historia Cryptocalvinismi in Lausat., Cf. Neues Lausitzisches Magazin, Vol. 94, 1918, pp.48ff.

² Mehre Merckwürdigkeiten, #8. The date is 1715 and is therefore earlier than the Knauthe ms.

³ Franckenberg, De Vita... #11.

1572 he was ordained pastor in Kesseldorf. In the autumn of the same year he was appointed diaconus at Löwenberg, in 1575 pastor at Sprottau, and in July 1600 he became the Pastor Primarius in Görlitz. Here he organized a Conventikel des Treuen Gottesknechts, the devotional group to which Boehme belonged.¹

In spite of his lack of University training, Moller was a prolific writer. Already in 1584, 1590, and 1591 he had published volumes of hymns which reveal his deep devotion and personal piety. The first hymnal was Meditationes sanctorum patrum durch Martin Mollerum,² Görlitz 1584. This work contained selected meditations in verse and prose from the writings of Augustine, Bernard, Tauler and others. In this volume Moller's beautiful translation of Bernard's Jesu dulcis memoria was printed*— a hymn which became a favorite among the Pietists and was included by Gottfried Arnold in his edition of Johann Arndt's Paradiesgärtlein and is thus often falsely ascribed to Arndt. The first two stanzas are:

O Jesu süß, wer dein gedenkt,
Dess Herz mit Freud wird überschwemmt,
Noch süßer aber alles ist,
Wo du, O Jesu, selber bist.

Jesu, du Herzens*Freud und Wonn,
Des Lebens*Brunn und wahrer Sonn,
Du gleichet nichts auf dieser Erd,
In dir ist, was man je begehrt...³

¹ Jecht, op. cit., p.27, and Kock, Geschichte des Kirchenlieds und Kirchengesangs, Stuttgart 1852, I, pp. 178-180.

² P. Wackernagel, Das Deutsche Kirchenlied, Leipzig, 1877, II, #54-57.

³ This hymn became one of the most popular of all German hymns, appearing in nearly all hymnals -- sectarian, Pietistic, and orthodox -- during the Seventeenth and first half of the Eighteenth Century.

A second part of this selection from the writings of the Fathers was printed in Görlitz, a work in which the chiliastic ideas of Moller are particularly evident. One of the chiliastic hymns begins: Der letzte Tag nu kommen wird.¹ In 1595, while still pastor at Sprottau, he had published a volume with the significant title: MYSTERIUM MAGNUM, Fleissige und andächtige Betrachtung des grossen Geheimniss der himmlischen Hochzeit und Verbündliss unseres Herrn Jesu Christi mit der christgläubigen Gemeine, seiner Braut, und wie man dasselbe nützlich und mit Freuden bedenken und tröstlich gebrauchen soll, Görlitz 1595.² In this work the unio mystica was conceived of in erotic terms as the real union of the believer with the corpus mysticum, the church, and the view was presented that the individual's life should serve as a pattern and example for the life of the whole congregation.³ In 1601, after Moller had been pastor in Görlitz for one year, he published the pericopes with his sermons based thereupon under the title of Praxis Evangeliorum.⁴ These sermons were composed from 1599 on, and thus they were delivered in part during the period of Boehme's association with Moller in the Görlitz church. Their influence upon Boehme was probably large for Peuckert has found parallel passages between Boehme's Aurora and these sermons by Moller.⁵ These sermons

1 Wackernagel, op. cit.,

2 Ritschl, Geschichte Des Pietismus, Bonn 1884, II, p27.

3 Ibid.

4 Peuckert, Reben, p.24.

5 Aurora ix,7; Praxis, III,52. Aurora, xii,26; Praxis II,12. Also Mysterium Magnum xlv, 12f; Praxis, II,78. Aurora, xx, 22ff; Praxis III,85. Sig.Rer., vii,39; Praxis III,112ff. A copy of Praxis is in the Schwenkfelder Historical Library.

called down the wrath of the Wittenberg theologian, the hot-blooded Solomon Gessner, champion of orthodoxy. In 1602 Moller was engaged in controversy with Gessner.¹ Gessner opposed the Praxis Evangeliorum with Christliche und treuhertzische Warnung an die löbliche Stände in Schlesien, Wittenberg 1602. Moller answered this scurrilous work with a Kurze Apologie, Görlitz, 1602. Gessner again attacked with Gründliche und ausführliche Wiederlegung der Nichtigen und gantz Calvinischen Apologie Molleri, Wittenberg 1602. Here the matter dropped. Moller's devotional works continued to appear from the press: Manuale Mortis;² Schedia Regia: Regentbüchlein des Kaisers Justiniani in 72 Aphorismoi oder Regeln gefasset und aus dem Griechischen verteutscht, 1605. Even after Moller's death on 2 March 1606 his writings continued to be published.³

When Martin Moller came to Görlitz in 1600 as Pastor Primarius Jacob Boehme was a young, pious shoemaker of twenty-five. He was recently married, and, although outwardly prospering, his

1 Peuckert, Leben, pp.23 and 138.

2 Hamburg, 1603 and Leipzig, 1604. Cf. M. Lipensius, Bibliotheca Realis Theologica, II, 324a, 524b, 216b.

3 The posthumous works were usually reprints of works already written: Praxis Evangeliorum Dominicalum Festis, Görlitz 1612; Thesaurus Precationum, oder Gebett- und Hauss der Sonn- und Festägl. Evangelien, Görlitz 1612; De Praeparatione ad Mortem, Oppenheim 1619; the same, Görlitz, 1620; the same, Lüneberg, 1631; the same, Frankfurt, 1664, 1673; Praxis Evangeliorum, Frankfurt 1626; the same, Nürnberg, 1624; Andachten, Sprüche, und Gedanken aus den Alt Vätern, Lüneberg, 1654; Andachtige Meditationen ende Handboexken, Zutphen, 1643; Historia Apostolorum Religiosorum, Hamburg, n.d.; Soliloquia de Passione Christi, Görlitz n.d. The sources for these titles are Lipensius, op. cit., and Gottfried Arnold's neglected but important work: Historie und Beschreibung der Mystischen Theologie, Moller's works are in the Schwenkfelder Historical Library.

mind was restless, probing the deeps of life. He attended Moller's conventicles -- of this one fact there is certainty -- where he met many persons of a like temperament from nobleman¹ and Paracelsian physician to peasant and fellow shoemaker. From Moller's writings and from the few facts known about him it is possible to assume that Moller's interest was practical and devotional² rather than speculative and theological, though it is not always possible to separate the two tendencies. It certainly may be assumed that the devout Pastor Primarius gave Boehme a vital stimulus by creating in the shoemaker's heart a pure ideal of churchly life. Glusing records that Moller was a lover of the Apostolic church, a pure witness of the Spirit, the translator of the Letters of the Martyred Ignatius, of the Dialogues of Theodoretus, and other³ devotional works of the Fathers. He was conversant with Tauler and German mysticism. The fact that Moller translated devotional meditations from Augustine, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Suso, Kempis,⁴ as well as the early Fathers is also significant for Boehme certainly read these books and was thus early exposed to the best of the ancient church and to German medieval mysticism. It seems wholly proper to conclude that Jacob Boehme, member of Moller's Conventicle, read the books of his pastor for these books were designed as handbooks of devotion. Other facts also are evident: Dr Peuckert, after

1 H. Heckel, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur in Schlesien, Breslau 1929, I, p.164.

2 Bornkamm, Luther und Boehme, p.75.

3 Mehre Merckwürdigkeiten, #8. (Cf. Appendix II, II, 5)

4 Ritschl, Pietismus, II, p.57.

comparing the Aurora and the Praxis Evangeliorum, concludes that Moller's influence upon Boehme was similar to that of Thomas á Kempis and Johann Arndt.¹ Albrecht Ritschl says that Moller's soteriology emphasized regeneration instead of justification; thus both for Moller and Boehme it was Christ in us, not Christ for us. Moller certainly led the young Boehme to the rich imagery of Brautmystik as represented by the medieval Bernard; he gave Boehme chiliasm and a desire to restore the purity of the Apostolic church, the restitutio ideal. He bred in the shoemaker hatred of dead orthodoxy, search for the Busskampf, and love of devotional piety.

One of Moller's mystical prayers has survived -- a prayer² emphasizing the Pauline idea of the new being in Christ.

Four of Moller's hymns became part of the main Lutheran hymnals of the period. They reveal a devout heart. In the characteristic subjective mood of Pietism, Moller wrote

Ach Gott! wie manche Hertzeleid
 Begegnet mir zu dieser Zeit,
 Der schmale Weg is Trübsalvoll,
 Den ich zum Himmel wandern soll.
 Wie schwerlich läst sich Fleisch und Blut
 Zeingen zu dem ewigen Gut.

Boehme follows Moller's designation of sinful man as a Würmlein, (Busse, i,6) for Moller had written:

¹ Rosenkreutzer, pp. 259-260

² Versuch eines allgemeinen evangelischen Gesang- und Gebetsbuchs zum Kirchen- und Hausgebrauche, Hamburg 1833, pp. 723-724.

Hier lieg ich armes Würmelein,
 Kan regen weder Arm noch Bein,
 Für Angst mein Hertz in Leib zerspringt,
 Mein Leben mit den Tode ringt.

Life struggling with death and producing Angst -- a short statement of Boehme's metaphysics. This Angst mood was characteristic of all of Moller's hymns:

Hilff, Helffer, hilff, in Angst und Noth,
 Erbarm dich mein, O treuer Gott!¹

This is about all that can be said about Martin Moller's influence on Jacob Boehme. The facts are few and Boehme himself silent. Only once does he mention the name, and that when he sends his greeting to the pastor's son from Dresden in 1624.²

¹ Geistliches Gothaisches Gesangbuch, Gotha 1738, pp.350, 620, 727, 756. Moller's hymns were printed in Görlitz sometime during his lifetime. Cf. Neumann, Geschichte von Görlitz, pp.472f.
² Epist., lxi, 12.

III. BOEHME'S BASIC MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Abraham von Franckenberg says that Jacob Boehme had his second 'illumination' in 1600. The Knauthe Ms also says that after Martin Moller's arrival in Görlitz in 1600 there followed many 'awakenings', among whom was Jacob Boehme. And there are two accounts of this 'experience' in Boehme's own writings, surprisingly full accounts at that.

Thus, sometime after 1600, stimulated by the pious pastor, Jacob Boehme's spirit felt the full impact of the confusion of reason and passion in his age. Two forces collided in his spirit: the one was the natural philosophy of the Renaissance which, beginning in antiquity, lived again in the Italian Platonists and which had come to a new and perhaps a profounder birth in Paracelsus. The other was that deep mystical impulse which had permeated German mysticism, which had charged the early Luther with fervent faith, and which had leavened the great mass of German Evangelicals. These two tendencies clashed in Boehme's heart, thus creating an empirical dialectic, and their opposition was the real source of Boehme's mystical strivings. Of this there can be no doubt.

Boehme twice described this basic experience: the first passage is that from the Epistle to Caspar Linder already quoted in the Introduction; the other is the account given in the xixth Chapter of the Aurora. Fortunately the date of this ex-

perience may be determined, for Boehme himself gives us the clue. He wrote of the Aurora (1612) in a Epistle:

It opened itself in me from time to time... the same was with me for a space of twelve years... before I could bring it forth into ~~an~~ external form of writing. (xii,12)

Here is something definite. Boehme's first writing was done in 1612. Therefore this basic experience must have taken place sometime around 1600.

The external stimulus may well have been Franckenberg's pewter dish -- and it is a pretty story -- but Boehme himself is far more precise and much more sensible. Boehme says that his mystical awakening began with an idea which he could not understand. Read what he says was his stimulation:

The true heaven, which is our own proper human heaven, into which the soul goes when it parts from the body, and into which Christ our King is entered, and from whence it was that he came from his Father, and was born, ~~and became man in the body of a woman~~ of the Virgin Mary, has hitherto been close hidden from the children of men, and they have many opinions about it.

Also the learned have scuffled about it with many strange scurrilous writings, falling upon one another in calumnious and disgraceful terms, whereby the holy name of God has been ~~deproached~~, his members wounded, his temple destroyed, and the holy name of heaven profaned with their calumniating and malicious enmity.

Men have always been of the opinion that heaven is many hundred, nay, many thousand miles distant from the face of the earth, and that God dwells only in that heaven.

Some naturalists or artists have undertaken to measure that height and distance, and have produced many strange and monstrous devices. Indeed, before this my knowledge and revelation of God, I held that only to be the true heaven, which in a round circumference and sphere, very azure of a light blue colour, extends itself above the stars, supposing that God had therein his peculiar being, and did rule only in the power of his holy spirit in this world.

But when this had given me many a hard blow and repulse, doubtless from the spirit, which had a great longing yearning towards me, at last I fell into a very deep melancholy and heavy sadness, when I beheld and contemplated the great deep of this world, also the sun and stars, the clouds, rain and snow, and considered in my spirit the whole creation of this world.

Wherein I found to be in all things, evil and good, love and anger, in the inanimate creatures, viz. in wood, stones, earth, and the elements, as also in men and beasts. (Aurora, xix, 1-6)

A straight-forward statement! Boehme could not understand how heaven and hell were separated; he could not comprehend his world in the patterns of Alexandrine thought with its separation of heaven, the world, and hell into static and independent levels of being:

Moreover, I considered the little spark of light, man, what he should be esteemed for with God, in comparison with this great work and fabric of heaven and earth.

But finding that in all things there was evil and good, as well in the elements as in the creatures, and that it went as well in this world with the wicked as with the virtuous, honest, and Godly; also that the barbarous people had the best countries in their possession, and that they had more prosperity in their ways than the virtuous, honest, and Godly had.

I was thereupon very melancholy, perplexed and exceedingly troubled, no Scripture could comfort or satisfy me, though I was very well acquainted with it, and versed therein; at which time the devil would by no means stand idle, but was often beating into me many heathenish thoughts, which I will here be silent in.

But when in this affliction and trouble I elevated my spirit (for I then understood very little or not at all what it was) I earnestly raised it up to God, as with a great storm of onset, wrapping up my whole heart and mind, as also all my thoughts and whole will and resolution, incessantly to wrestle with the love and mercy of God, and not to give over, until he blessed me, that is, until he enlightened me with His holy Spirit, whereby I might understand His will, and be rid of my sadness. And then the spirit did break through.

But when, in my resolved zeal, I gave so hard an assault, storm, and onset upon God, and upon all the gates of hell, as if I had more reserves of virtue and power ready, with

a resolution to hazard my life upon it, (which assuredly were not in my ability without the assistance of the spirit of God), suddenly, after some violent storms made, my spirit did break through the gates of hell, even into the innermost birth or geniture of the deity, and there I was embraced with love, as a bridegroom embraces his dearly beloved bride. (Aurora, xix, 7-11)

A strange Durchbruch -- 'through the gates of hell!' But he continues:

But the greatness of the triumphing that was in the spirit I cannot express, either in speaking or writing; neither can it be compared to anything, but to that wherein the life is generated in the midst of death, and it is like the resurrection from the dead.

In this light my spirit suddenly saw through all, and in and by all the creatures, even in herbs and grass, it knew God, who he is, and how he is, and what his will is: And suddenly in that light my will was set on by a mighty impulse, to describe the being of God. (Aurora, xix, 12,13)

This is a literary motivation which at times left, but it was never completely extinguished:

From this light now it is that I have my knowledge, as also my will, impulse, and driving, and therefore I will set down this knowledge in writing according to my gift, and let God work His will; and though I should irritate or enrage the whole world, the devil, and all the gates of hell, I will look on and wait what the LORD intends with it. (Aurora, xix, 17)

Here, then, is one of the two accounts of the basic mystical experience which Boehme had sometime around 1600.

From these two accounts -- the one in the Epistle to Caspar Linder quoted in the Introduction and this passage from the xixth Chapter of the Aurora -- several facts emerge. In the first place the mystical stimulus was two-fold. There was an intellectual one, a confusion of reason, because Boehme could not understand the medieval and characteristically Alexandrine separation of heaven and hell in the light of his own ideas of

the Providence of God. The second aspect of his stimulus was an emotional one, a confusion of passion growing out of a speculative realization of the first. It was his difficulty with the problem of theodicy: why does this all-good and all-powerful God permit evil in his world? If God is all-good and if He is not in a far-off heaven, then why does he permit evil, wicked men to possess the best countries? The natural gnosis from an experience thus stimulated is that in all things there is good and evil. Boehme's mystical Durchbruch in which he broke through the 'gates of hell' brought him the understanding of how and why good and evil were in all things.

Here in Boehme's heart, then, the two basic tendencies of his age collided. Both his reason and his passion were confused. And their confusion produced his mystical gnosis.

Did Boehme lose his individuality and become melted into the abyss of mere being? Did he experience nirvana?

Now, thou must not think that I have climbed up aloft into heaven, and beheld it with my carnal or fleshly eyes. O no! Hear me, you half-dead angel! I am as you are, and have no greater light in my outward being than you have. Moreover, I am a sinful ~~and~~ mortal man, as well as you, and I must every day and hour grapple, struggle, and fight with the devil who afflicts me in my corrupted lost nature, in the fierce or wrathful quality, which is in my flesh, as in all men continually. Now I get the better of him, now he is too hard for me; yet for all that he has not overcome or conquered me. For our life is a continual warfare against the devil. (Aurora)

What then is his claim? This:

To me is shown the ladder of Jacob upon which I am climbed up even into heaven, and have received my ware and offer it for sale: Therefore, if anyone will climb up after me, let him take heed that he be not drunken, but he must be girt with the sword of the spirit. For he

must climb through a horrible deep, a giddiness will frequently come into his head, and besides, he must climb through the midst or center of the Kingdom of Hell, and there he will feel by experience what a deal of scoffings and upbraidings he must endure. In this combat I had many hard trials to my heart's grief; My sun was often eclipsed or extinguished; but did rise again, and the oftener it was eclipsed ~~and~~ put out the brighter and clearer was its rising again. (Aurora, xiii, 22-24)

What is the mode of Durchbruch? What is the unio mystica?

When the sweet spring or fountain-water rises up in the Light, through all the spirits, then one tastes the other; and then the spirit becomes living, and the power of life penetrates through all. In that power the one smells the other; and through this qualifying influence one feels the other. So there is nothing but a hearty, loving, friendly aspect or seeing, a pleasant smell, a good relishing or tasting, and a lovely feeling, a gracious, amiable, blessed kissing, a feeding upon one another, and a lovely walking and conversing together. This is the gracious, amiable, blessed BRIDE, which re- in her BRIDEGROOM; herein also is love, joy, and delight; here is light and brightness or clarity; here is a pleasant and lovely smell; here is friendly and sweet taste. And this is forever without end! How can a creature sufficiently rejoice therein? O dear love and graciousness, amiable blessedness! Surely you have no end. No man can see any end in you, your profound deep is unsearchable. You are everywhere over us; only ~~in the~~ fierce devils are you not thus, they have spoiled and perished thee in themselves. Now you will say, where then are these gracious, amiable, and blessed spirits to be met with? Do they dwell only in themselves in heaven? This is the other open gate of the deity, here you must set your eyes wide open, and rouse up and awaken the spirit on your half-dead heart; for this is not an obscure fiction, contrivance, or fantasy. (Aurora, ix, 67-73)

But Jacob Boehme's mystical embrace was also born of his shunning of sin, of his holy discontent with recalcitrant evil. Along with his confusion of reason there also went his confusion of passion, his deep and overpowering conviction of sin.

Boehme's rebellion against the disordered and confused age in which he lived was prophetic to the core. In a magni-

ficent passage, reminiscent of the doom prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, Boehme cried out against the wickedness and evil of his age. But this passage begins with a description of the mystical embrace -- a significant instance of the psychological relationship between prophecy and mystical experience:

There the Bridegroom kisses his Bride! O gracious amiable blessedness and great love! How sweet art Thou! How pleasant and lovely is thy relish and taste! How ravishingly sweet dost Thou smell! O noble light and bright glory, who can comprehend thy exceeding beauty? How comely adorned is thy love! How curious and dainty are Thy colours! And all this eternally! Who can express it? Or, why do I write, I whose tongue stammers like a child that is learning to speak! With what shall I compare it? Or to what shall I liken it? Shall I compare it with the love of this world? No, that is but a mere dark valley to it. O immense greatness! I cannot compare thee to anything, but only to the resurrection of the dead; there will the love-fire rise up again in us, and embrace man courteously and friendly, and kindle again our artringent, bitter, cold, dark, and deadly quality, and embrace us most friendly. O noble guest! O, why didst thou depart from us; O fierceness, wrath and astringency, or severity, thou art the cause of it!

Here the dialectical relationship of that vision which may be compared with 'the resurrection~~of~~ of the dead' to the world of evil and sin is clear. He continues:

O fierce and wrathful devil! O, what hast thou done, who hast sunk down thyself and thy beautiful bright angels into darkness? Woe, woe forever! O was not the gracious amiable, blessed, and fair love alive in thee also?

This is, of course, Boehme's central problem: how did good and evil come to be? How did this sinful world arise from a created universe originally good? Further:

O Thou high and lofty-~~ind~~ed devil! Why wouldst Thou not be contented?

Again the same question:

Wert thou not a Cherubim? And was there anything so beautiful and bright in heaven as thou? For what didst thou seek? Wouldst thou be the whole or total God? Didst thou not know that thou wert a creature, and hadst not the fan and casting shovel in thy own hand or power? O, why do I pity thee, thou stinking goat? O thou cursed stinking devil! How thou hast spoiled us! How wilt thou excuse thyself? What wilt thou object to me?... O thou lying devil, stay but a little, the spirit will discover thy shame to thee; tarry but a little while longer, and thy pomp, pride, and pageantry will be at an end. Stay, the bow is bent, the arrow will hit thee, and then whither wilt thou fall? The place is already provided and prepared, it wanteth only to be kindled; wilt thou bring fuel lustily to it, that thou be not frozen with cold? Thou wilt sweat very hard... Woe, woe, thou poor miserable blinded man, why sufferest thou the devil to make thy body and soul so dark and blind? O temporal good, and the pleasure and voluptuousness of this life! Thou blind whore, why dost thou go a-wooing and a-whoring to the devil? O security! The devil watcheth for thee! O high-mindedness! Thou art a hellish fire. O beauty, pomp, or bravery! Thou art a dark valley. O potency of dominion! Thou art the fierce wrath of God! O man! Why will the world be too narrow for thee? Thou wilt needs have all for thyself; and if thou hadst it, thou wouldst not have room enough. O, this is the devil's high-mindedness, who fell out of heaven into hell! O man! Alas, O man! Why dost thou dance with the devil's who is thine enemy? Art thou not afraid that he will thrust thee into hell?... O thou blind man! how doth the devil mock thee? O, wherefore dost thou trouble heaven? Dost thou think thou wilt not have enough in this world? O blind man! Is not heaven and earth thine? Nay, God Himself too? What dost thou bring into this world, or what dost Thou take along with thee at thy going out of it? O thou miserable man, return, the Heavenly Father hath stretched forth both his arms and calleth Thee; do but come, he will take thee into his love. Art thou not His child? He doth love thee. If he did hate thee, he must be at odds with Himself!... O ye watchmen of Israel! Why do ye sleep? Awake from the sleep of whoredom, and dress and trim your lamps; the bridegroom cometh, sound your trumpets. O ye covetous, stiffnecked and drunken roisterers! how do you woo and go a-whoring after the covetous devil! Thus saith the Lord: Will ye not feed my people which I have committed to your charge? Behold I have set you upon Moses' Chair, and entrusted you with my flock; but you mind nothing but the wool, and mind not the sheep, and therewith you build your great palaces. But I will set you on the stool of pestilence, and my own shepherd shall feed my sheep eternally.



O thou fair world, how doth heaven complain of thee? How dost thou trouble the elements? O wickedness and malice; when wilt thou leave and give over? Awaken! Awaken and bring forth, thou sorrowful woman; behold the bridegroom cometh, and requireth fruit at thy hands: Why dost thou sleep? Behold, He knocketh! O gracious, amiable, blessed love and clear bright light, tarry with us, I pray thee, for the evening is at hand. O truth! O justice and righteousness¹ judgment: what is become of thee? Doth not the spirit wonder, as if he had never seen the world before now? O why do I write of the wickedness of this world? I must do it, and the world curseth me for it. (Aurora, viii.)

This is an illuminating passage.

Jacob Boehme here finds his place in the roster of prophets and ambassadors of God for he too was a farmer's son predicting the ultimate victory of justice and righteousness in a world of evil and selfish men. In 1675 the Silesian Schwärmer,¹ Quirinius Kuhlmann, wrote to the then Pastor Primarius in Görlitz: tres tibi proponam Dei nuncios nostri seculi, unum Prophetam, alterum Sophum, tertium Literarium. The first was Christoph Kotter, the second Jacob Boehme, and the third Johann Arndt. Boehme thus finds his place among the roster of prophets:

The tribulation and destruction of Babel approaches with exceeding haste, the storm arises on all coasts; it shall be a sore tempest; vain hope deceives, for the breaking of the tree is at hand... righteousness and truth are trodden under foot; great heaviness, trouble, and clamity grow apace.. The tower of Babel is without foundation; men suppose to prop it up, but a wind from the Lord overthrows it. The hearts and thoughts of men shall be revealed... many shall betray themselves... the hypocrites and titular Christians shall quail for fear when their false ground shall be revealed. An eagle (the Emperor of Germany) has hatched out young lions in his (nest) the electors, and brought them prey so long, till

1. Cf. Gottfried Arnold, Kirchen und ketzer Historei, (1729) II, 199ff.
2 1555-1621.

they have grown great, hoping that they should likewise bring their prey to him again; but they have forgotten that; and they take the eagle, and pluck off his feathers, and bite off his claws for unfaithfulness... If the rich man knew upon what foundations he stood at this time he would enter into himself, and look unto his later end... at this time the fountains of Grace shall flow with sweet water and the afflicted and oppressed shall be refreshed. (Epist., xli, Postscript 5)

Boehme's prophecies were not worked out with the same mathematical precision which was characteristic of the chiliastic dreamers of his and other ages. He rejected all precise datings of the world's end. In Letzte Zeit I he wrote:

Concerning the end, or limit of Babel's downfall, the same likewise is not sufficiently manifest to me. To me is given to know that the time is nigh and even now at hand, but the year and the day I know not; thereupon I leave it to God's counsel, and to those to whom God shall reveal it. (59-60)

But to say that Boehme was a prophet is more than metaphorical because he created a philosophy of history, or rather he continued a tradition of historical interpretation, which was far more profound than the calculated judgments of his contemporary prognosticators. He dreamed of a new world order. He envisioned a new level of religious living and he gave himself a rôle in the creation of this new world for he felt that he himself was the Luther of a profounder Reformation:

I hope that the time of the new reformation will soon come when the children of Christ will not be called shoemaker's blacking. (Epistl, lxxiii,9)... You shall yet hear wonderful things, for the time of the Reformation is born of which it was told me three years since by a vision. 1 (Epist., lviii)

1 This vision must have been in 1621 for this letter was written in 1624.

The time of this great reformation already is

born; whom it lights upon, him it hits; whosoever wakes, he sees it; the time is already appeared, and will soon appear; he that wakes sees it; many have already felt it; but there must first a great tribulation pass over before it be wholly manifest. The cause is the great contention of the learned, who tread cup of Christ under foot, and contend about a child that never was worse since men were; this shall be manifest, therefore let no honest man defile himself with such contention; there is a fire from the Lord in it, who will consume it, and Himself reveal the truth. (Epist.,lv,65.)

Boehme expected this great day soon to come. It would be a time of knowledge, of glorious certainty, of the removal of the confusions of reason and passion that characterized his own experience. For

The whole Deity will reveal Himself, which is the Day-Spring, Dawning, or Morning Redness, and the breaking forth of the Great Day of God, in which whatsoever is generated from death into the regeneration of life shall be restored and rise again. (Aurora xxii,65)

This is his basic conviction of sin, the certain prerequisite for mystical striving, the search for the resolution of the disunities of being.

Boehme felt that God had chosen him to reveal that which was hidden from the rest of mankind:

~~Because I have written~~ of heavenly and divine things, which are altogether strange to the corrupted, perished nature of man, the reader will doubtless wonder at the simplicity of the author and be offended at it... What was Abel? A shepherd. What were Enoch and Noah? Plain and simple men. What were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Herdsmen. What was David when the mouth of the Lord called him? A Shepherd. What were the great and small prophets? Vulgar, plain, and mean people: some of them but country people and herdsmen, counted the underlings or footstools of the world; men counted them but mere fools... How came our King Jesus Christ into this world? Poor, and in great trouble and misery, and had not where to lay His head. What were the Apostles? Poor, despised, illiterate fishermen. And what were

they that believed their preaching? The poorer and meaner sorts of the people. The High Priests and Scribes were the executioners of Christ who cried out, Crucify Him, Crucify Him! What were they that in all ages of the church of Christ stood by it most stoutly and constantly? The poor, contemptible, despised people, who shed their blood for the sake of Christ. But who were they that falsified and adulterated the right, pure Christian doctrine, and always fought against and opposed it? Even the learned Doctors and Scribes, popes, cardinals, bishops, and great dons or masters and teachers. And why did the world follow after them? But because they had great respect, were in great authority and power, lived stately, and carried a port in the world. Even such a proud whore is the corrupt, perished human nature. Who was it purged out of the churches in Germany the Pope's greediness of money, his idolatry, bribery, deceit and cheating? A poor despised monk and friar. By what power and might? By the power of God the Father, and by the power and might of God the Holy Spirit. (Aurora, ix, lff)

This is what drove Boehme to write against the sin and the suffering and the evil in the world.

The world simply supposes that one must see God with the earthly and stellar eyes; it knows not that God dwells not in the outer life but in the inner. If it sees nothing strange in God's children, it says: Oh! He is a fool, he was born foolish, he is melancholy. So much it knows. Listen, Master Hans! I know well what melancholy is. I also know well what is of God. I know both of these, and also thee in thy blindness. But such a knowledge requires not a state of melancholy but a knightly wrestling. (Menschw., II, vii, 11)

Here the dialectical nature of conviction of sin and knowledge of God is clear. His melancholy, his conviction of sin, were founded upon his knowledge of God. This is why he wrote:

If all trees were scribes and all branches pens, and if all hills were books and all waters ink, they could not give a sufficient description of the sorrow which Lucifer hath brought into this place. (Aurora, xvi, 26)

Here was Boehme's confusion of passion.

IV. BOEHME'S LIFE: 1600-1612

The year 1600 saw Jacob Boehme's great mystical awakening but man cannot live by illuminations alone. Boehme was not yet established as a burgher in Görlitz: he was a young dreamer of twenty-five who still needed to carve his niche in the mercantile life of this town.

That Boehme prospered during the early years of his life on Görlitz is evident from several facts. Obviously serious and perhaps even a careful workman at his last, he soon became well-established at his handiwork and a leader in his guild. During this period the tanners and the shoemakers were at loggerheads and Jacob Boehme was in the middle of this struggle. 24 July 1604 he was released from prison with the condition that he was not to tan hides for other masters and upon the payment of 6 shillings fine within two weeks.¹ He evidently had been tanning hides over and above the amount he himself needed, selling the surplus to other shoemakers. The jealousy of the guilds is further evidenced by an ambiguous reference in the Ratsprotokoll for 29 April 1606 when a Jacob Boehme and Jacob Kissling were imprisoned because they had said that the tawer Max Röhricht was a swindler. During the trial it was inadvertently discovered that Röhricht

¹ Ratsprotokoll, 24 July 1604. Cf Jecht, Böhme, p.23. And cf. text in Appendix.

actually had swindled Boehme and Kissling, so he too was jailed. 2 May the three men were released, sufficient bond having been posted for them by Hans Löwe, Paul Hillebrand, and Hans Siedel.¹ The ambiguity of the reference arises from the fact that the Jacob Boehme referred to may have been either the shoemaker or the tanner. The probability is that it was the shoemaker, because Paul Hillebrand, one of the bonders, was the shoemaker's neighbour. At any event, Jacob Boehme, the shoemaker, was an eager, zealous member of his guild.²

Further tangible evidence of Boehme's prosperity is found in the notices of matriculations in the Gregoriusfeste of March 1608 when his two sons, Jakob and Michel, took part in the celebration and were classed among the locupletiores (wealthy), and not among either the pauperes (poor) or the equites (nobility).³

28 July 1608 Jacob Boehme sold his house in the Rabensgasse to Zacharias Kiesslingen for 330 marks, a profit of thirty marks above the purchase price.⁴ Two years passed before Boehme again became a house owner. Thus his name does not appear on a list of master shoemakers who were property owners for this period.⁵ The probability is that he had already moved into the house he was soon to buy and which was owned by his brother-in-law,

1 Ratsprotokoll, 29 April 1606, and 2 May 1606. Cf. Jecht, op. cit., pp. 23, 24.

2 Jecht, op. cit., p. 23.

3 Ibid., p. 17.

4 Görlitzer Kaufbuch, 1605ff. Bl. 186a. Cf. Jecht, op. cit., p. 10.

5 Ibid., p. 18.

Valentin Lange. In 1610 Boehme was appointed Trustee for his apparently young and unmarried sister-in-law, Rosine, daughter of Hans Kuntzschmann,¹ an event which suggests the death of Boehme's father-in-law, and also implies that at this time Boehme was equally as prosperous as his brother-in-law, Lange. 22 June of this same year Boehme bought Lange's house in the Neiss Gate. This house lay immediately outside the old city along the road leading to Leignitz and Hirschberg. It opened on the bridge to the center of the city, thus affording easy access to the market place as well as being along one of the busiest roads in Eastern Germany. To negotiate the purchase Boehme had to borrow fifty marks and agree to pay the remainder in installments. The date of this financial transaction was 10 November 1610.² Boehme made the following payments on this house: 13 November 1610, 200 marks; 28 February 1612, 25 marks; 9 February 1613, 25 marks, 1614, 25 marks; 1616, 25 marks; 1618,³ 5 marks. This sequence of events tells more than it first seems to, for if the purchase of the house was the direct result of the death of Boehme's father-in-law, then these transactions represent the settling of the estate, and the fact that the house was bought from Lange suggests that Lange was the executor of Hans Kuntzschmann's worldly goods. That the payments were made installments only shows that Lange liquidated

1 Jecht., op. cit., p.24.

2 Görlitzer Kaufbuch, 1605ff. Bl.45b. Cf. Jecht, op.cit., p.12.

3 Neumann, Geschichte von Görlitz, p. 367.

the estate slowly.

About this period in Boehme's life he experienced his 'third illumination' which Franckenberg describes in the following words:

But according to God's holy counsel and determination, who manageth his works in secret, about ten years after, viz, in 1610, by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, he was a third time stirred up and renewed by God. Whereupon, being so enlightened, with such grace bestowed upon him, he could not put it out of mind, nor strive against his God, therefore did, by small means, and without the help of any books, but only with the Holy Scriptures, write secretly for himself... 1

In 1612 the ever-present struggle between the Görlitz tanners and shoemakers again broke out, a struggle in which, from all evidences, Boehme participated. It seems that Jacob Boehme and Hans Bürger had been sent by their guild to Löwenberg (Lemberg), some fifty miles to the East, to buy leather for the Görlitz shoemakers. They returned with 332 leathers, purchased at two thalers and three silvers a piece. The Görlitz tanners protested and took their case to court. The Protokoll vindicating

1 Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #12. This 'illumination', along with the two previously quoted, constitutes the classic descriptions of Boehme's mysticism. Yet Franckenberg himself mentions others: a 'fourth stirring of the Ground divinely laid to him' by which he was strengthened and roused with superabundant Grace. This fourth stirring led to the Aurora. Other 'illuminations' also have been searched out. But the best authority on Boehme's mysticism is Boehme himself. While these accounts by Franckenberg contain a modicum of truth, they may be rejected because they are not primary. Franckenberg learned to know Jacob Boehme in 1621 or 1622. His De Vita et Scriptis was in print only by 1639, although a shortened version, without these illuminations, was in print in 1631. Franckenberg, then, had the same materials which are available to the modern scholar-- Boehme's works. And on the basis of Boehme's own accounts --surprisingly full accounts-- the empirical bases of his mysticism may be reconstructed.

the shoemakers is an expression of pious joy, and on the basis of handwriting historians believe it to be from the pen¹ of Boehme himself.

LAUS DEO, LAUS DEO, LAUS DEO! Den 25 August half Gott der Herr, der rechte Augustus, dass die Rottgerber mit Schanden ihren hochweisen, übernatürlichen samt ihren Helfershelfern geschmiedeten, unauflöslichen, wie sie condeten, Abschied wieder ein antworten mussten und den Meistern des ehrlichen Gewerbs der Schuhmachen ihre erkaufte Rauleder aus den Häusern in ihr Gerbehaus mussten folgen lassen; deren waren 332, so wir, die Schuhmacher, zu Lemberg bei einem Kauf- und Handelsmann kauften das Stück pro 2 Thaler und 3 Argent. Wurdet getheilet und gezahlet. Gott sei ewig Lob... Hand Bürger und Jakob Bem kauften solche Leder zu Lemberg, waren treffliche Leder, also dass wir, Gott Lob, den Schaden und Jammer vergessen cunnten, den uns die Gerber gemacht hatten. Wurden gegerbet schön und gut und hernach geteilet, dafür wir Gott danken.

This reference in the Guild Record Books is reproduced in facsimile in Jecht, Jakob Böhme: Gedenkgabe der Stadt Görlitz,² and the handwriting is almost certainly that of Jacob Boehme. Yet the fact that Boehme wrote this into the Guild Record merely proves that Boehme was then Secretary of the Guild and does not actually establish his authorship.

25 May 1612 Jacob Boehme acted as security for a rascally³ farmer from Lauterbach.

These are the few biographical facts that survive for this period of his life. He was an ordinary citizen of his town -- a simple man, to be sure, and one who did not betray any of the

1 Jecht, op. cit., p.23'

2 Ibid., pp.23,24,28.

3 B. Scultetus, Kirchenwesen, Varia 98 of the Rats-archiv, p. 238. Quoted by Jecht, op. cit., p.24.

qualities which, after he had taken the perilous leap into authorship, were to gain him his reputation. But he did take that leap.

1612 was a fateful year in Jacob Boehme's life.

Beginning on New Year's Day he began writing a book. Perhaps he had written something before. Perhaps the first eight chapters of the Aurora had been written down as early as 1608. He certainly has no serious designs for authorship until that fateful day, New Years Day 1612, when he took his pen in hand and wrote down on a large foolscap the significant title:

Morgen Röthe im auffgang. / Dass ist / Die wurtzel
oder mutter der PHILO- / SOPHIA? ASTROLOGIA vnd THE-
OLOGIA. Auss Rechten Grunde / Oder / Beschreibung der
natur / vnd Elementa Creaturlich worden (ist) sind.
Auch / von beiden qualiteten, Bösen und gutten: wh / hehr
alle Ding seinen Vrsprung hatt, vnd / wie es letzt stehed
vnd wirked, vnd wie / es an Ende dieses Zeit werden
wirdt:/ Auch wie Gottes / vnd der Hellen Reich / be-
schaffen ist / vnd wie die Menschen in / ieden Creaturlich
wircken. Alles auss rechtem grunde/ in erkendnis des
Geistes / im wollen Gottes / mit fleiss / Gestelled /
Durch Jacob Böhmen in Görlitz im Jahr 1612! Etatis Sve'
37 Annor. In die 8 pente / coste Anno 1612. 1

For a shoemaker this was ambitious: to discuss the true ground and root of all philosophy, astrology, and theology. Yet Jacob Boehme felt that he wrote not

from the instruction or knowledge received from men, nor from the learning or reading of books, but I have written out of my own book which was opened in me, being the noble similitude of God, the book of the noble and precious image. (Epist., xii, 14)

W. Buddecke, Verzeichniss der Handschriften..., p.1. The title here given differs from that in the various printed versions. The autograph ms survives.

The Morgen Röthe im Aufgang... was not written for public circulation; it was written, as Boehme often says, for his own use. This reticence on Boehme's part -- in spite of numerous addresses to the 'dear reader' -- must be viewed as a natural product of his intolerant age. Giordano Bruno had been burned at Rome 17 February 1600. Valentin Weigel refused to allow his works to be published during his lifetime and it was not until more than twenty years after his death, in 1609, that the dangerous works of the Zschopau pastor became known. Kepler and Gallileo were in difficulties with the authorities, and the devout and certainly harmless Johann Arndt, whose Vier Bücher vom Wahren Christenthum and Paradiesgärtlein had appeared between 1605 and 1612, paid heavily for his indiscretions. And then the strange books of the Rosenkreutzer, advocating a new and more thorough-going Reformation, appeared anonymously between 1610-1616 in Kassel and Frankfurt. Indeed, the daring minds of the age were necessarily cautious, never risking publication without security, and rarely 'escaping' into print. Boehme was no master of courage and it is therefore not surprising that he

intended to keep this my writing by me all the days of my life and not to deliver it into the hands of any; but it fell out according to the providence of the Most High that I entrusted a certain person with it; by means whereof it was published; without my knowledge or consent, and the first book was thereby taken from me (by Gregory Richter, Lord Primate of Görlitz), and because many wonderful things were revealed therein (which the mind of man was not presently capable to comprehend) I was fain to suffer much from reason. (Epist., xii, 12)

This 'certain person' was the Schwenkfeldian Lord of nearby

Leopondshain, Carl von Ender von Sercha.¹ Ender was of an old Schwenkfeldian family. He was widely traveled and he had studied at the Görlitz gymnasium between 1586-1595 as well as at the University of Frankfurt. He had been a member of Martin Moller's Conventikel des Treuen Gottesknecht where he shared with Boehme the devotional fervour of the pious Pastor Primarius. Like his forbears he was a devout, friendly, and sincere man, a parron of the humanities and a noble character.³

When Carl von Ender discovered that the Görlitz shoemaker had written a book, and when, after reading it, he found that it was a strange book full of deep speculations and devout expressions, he had several copies made. One of these copies fell into the hands of Gregory Richter, Pastor Primarius in Görlitz since Moller's death in 1606. Richter was a zealous watchdog of orthodoxy, a vigorous opponent of 'Enthusiasm' in all its forms. Born 1 February 1560 (o.s.) at Ostritz, the son of the monastary smith, he turned from the anvil to the pulpit, becoming the champion of Lutheranism in the Lausitz.⁴ He had helped to protest the orthodoxy of Görlitz in the Elector's court during the Crypto-Calvinistic troubles.⁵ He was not a popular preacher for his sermons were long, weakly delivered, and spoken with slovenly diction.⁶ The Görlitz Council reproved him

1 Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #13

2 H. Heckel, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur in Schlesien, Breslau 1929, p.164.

3 Jecht, Böhme, p.61

4 Jecht, op. cit., pp.32-33.

5 Cf. supra, p.33.

6 Jecht, op. cit., p.33.

for his reforming zeal, and in 1612, during a visitation of the plague, after he had reviled a busy physician for not attending to his duties, and then had fled himself from the pestilence to the neighbouring village of Sprottau, the Görlitz Council, in whom the supervision of ecclesiastical affairs was vested, reproved him¹ and ordered him to remain in the manse and mind his own affairs. The citizens however felt no respect for their Pastor. They wrote of him:

Quaeritur inclusus cur sit in aedes?
 Me Samaritani calce petivit equus? 2

When the ~~seal~~ous Richter discovered that the plain shoemaker whose face he regularly saw before him at Gottesdienst had written a book -- and perhaps even a Ketzerbuch at that -- and when he realized that the already suspected Schwenkfeldian nobleman, Carl von Ender, was quietly spreading the word of a new prophet, he was naturally enraged. But there seems to have been more reason than a Ketzerbuch to turn the head of the Pastor Primarius, for Cornelius Weisner, in his Wahrhafter Relation, records an incident which gives plausible reason for Richter's hatred of Jacob Boehme. This incident is obviously hagiographical and, although it does not seriously contradict the known facts, it may be accepted as a general account of the reason for Richter's dislike of Boehme. The Weisner account is as follows:

But De Actu Gerlicensi, which I lately gave you an account of in N, I have received true information of it from the forementioned faithful friends: thus Antagonista Gerlicensis

¹ Iechtecht, op. cit., p. 33.
² Fechner, Leben, p. xliv.

ille qui ibidem Pastor Gewesen, did lend to one of Jacob Behme's Newphewes, a young Baker, who had lately married a Niece of Jacob Behmes, One dollar for his necessity, to buy wheate to make white bread at Christmas, for which he presented him in Thankfulness, a good big white loaf; and then soon after the Holy-Days, he brought the Dollar of Money and paid it to him againe; in hope the preacher would for the Interest of the Dollar, accept of his former present, in full satisfaction being he used it but for a fortnight. But the preacher unsatisfied, pronounced against him God's anger and terrible curse, and so vehemently terrified the young baker therewith, that he fell into very deep perplexity, Melancholy, and despaire of his salvation, in that he had enraged the Priest, and had such a curse or anathema from him; so that for the space of several days he spake to no body; nor would say what hurt him, but went up and down sighing and speaking to himself with great perplexity, till at last upon the hearty entreaty and desire of his wife, her uncle Jacob Behme took the matter upon him; and so friendly discoursed with the perplexed young man, till he found what lay upon him, and after he perceived it, he comforted him and spoke peace to him. And without life-discouragement he clearly went to the enraged preacher, and courteously entreated him no longer to be angry with the young man, but that he would be favourable to the young man, he would himself, for the young man's sake, satisfy him, the enraged preacher: what he desired further for the Interest of the Dollar he lent him, and would willingly bring it to him, if he did but know how much the Pricate desired: yet thought that the poore young man, according to his ability had paid enough for it, yet if he pleased to have any more, he would supply what was wanting in it. Whereupon the Preacher with impatience brake forth: saying what had that Rascall (J.B.) to doe with him, to disquiet himself and disturb him? What was that to him? he should meddle with his own business and be gone. But he continued his importunity, and entreated his favour, promising to make satisfaction, and give him content: But the primate, ashamed of his injustice and wrong, would not acknowledge it, nor say, what he desired, but still continually bade this supplicant or interposer to get him gone, and shewed him the outward dore out of which he was to get him gone. But the Pricate sat upon his chaire and had his slippers on, and when the honest interposer humbly and meekly sighing to God, very lovingly, for his unsuccessful business went away, as he was going out of the Dore, gave the angry Pricate a Christian valediction, saying, God preserve your worship. The Pricate was angry at it, and because of his blessing him was much worse than before: and took of his slipper, and threw it out at the honest man, saying,

what have you to doe, thou wicked Rogue, to bid me, or wish me a good night? What care I for thy blessing? &c. But the Deare man calmly took up the Slipper and carried it at his feete againe, and said: Sir! be noy angry, I doe you no wrong. I commend you to God: So at this time he departed from him. Till on Sunday following the Preacher in the pulpit, vehemently inveyed against the blessed Deare Man of God, and thundered abominably and horribly against him by name, particularly threatening the destruction of the whole city; exclaiming against him for a maker of uproars, a seditious vaine fellow, and a heretick. And admonished them the Magistrates in the presence of the Congregation, to be avenged against such Tumultuous opposers of the Holy Office, or Function of Preaching, who disturbed the Preacher, and molested him in hiw own house; and writes Heretikall bookes, lest God be amgry with them, and in His anger, cause the City to sink, and be swallowed up; as was done in the Insurrection of Corob Dathan and Abiram, who withstood Moses, and they and theirs with them, must be swallowed up into the Earth and gone into the abyss of Hell. Upon which the Innocent, and falsely accused man, who sate just at a pillar right over against the preaching pulpit; where he had his seate, and heard it all with patience himself; held his peace, till all the people were gone from the church, he staying all that while in his seat till the preacher with his Chaplain or fellow officer, went out of the Vestry room through the church. Then he followed themL and without in the Church-yard spoke to the preacher friendly and courteously and asked him what hurt heh had done him; he could not conceive with himself, that he had given one Evill word, prayed him in the presence of worshipfull Chaplain who was there and went along with him; to put him in minde of his fault, and Express it particularly, that he might renounce it and repent, which he faine would doe if he did but know wherein he had transgressed. Whereupon the preacher would answer nothing but looked upon him as if he would kill him with his Lookes; and in a rage and Fury burst out beginning to curse and wrong him horrible, saying: Get thee out from me, Satan, tumble them into the abyss of hell with thy Disturbance; canst thou not let me alone? must thou here raile at me and molest me? Dost thou not see that I am a spiritual clergyman? pointing at his habit or Black Priests gowne, and goe on in myooffice? But the troubled and highly wronged man gave him an answer: Yes, worshipful Sir, I see well that you are a Spiritual, or Clergyman, and have heard attentively in the church: and have seen that you have stood there in your office, and doe justly esteem you without all further contradiction, for a spiritual or clergyman; and I come therefore, and entreate you, as a spiritual or clergyman; that you will tell me, what hurt I have done you. And turning himself to the other Spiritual or Clergyman and

Chaplain, entreated him saying, Worshipful dear Sir, help me I pray upon my earnest entreaty to the Preacher, that he would tell me in your presence, what I have spoken of done against him, for which he was so vehement against me in the pulpit, and hath spoke to the magistrate to aveng it. Upon which the preacher was still more enraged: what he would needs have sent the servant he had behind him for a Serjeant or City Officer or Bayly, to take him away and put him in prison, which the Chaplain spoke against, and prevented it so that it was not done; and excused the man, and bid him goe to his house. The Munday morning following, when the Magistrates were met at the Councill House; and sent for the false-accused before them; they examined him, perceived no evil in Him, and found no anger or dislike wither in words or deeds or behaviour, to proceed from him; nor did they observe anything that was blameable; they asked him what hirt he had done the preacher? He answered, he knew not, neither could he know from the preacher himself; and therefore intreated most submissively and earnestly; that they in their wisdomes would sent for the Complainant or Preacher, and cause him to say what he had done to him! Upon which the Whole Council concluded that it was just that the preacher should be friendly entreated to come to them, and required him particularly to signifie the gravamina or grievances to the members sent to Him. Whereupon he was enraged, and sent them word what he had to doe with their Judgment-house or Council-House; what he hath to say, that he shall speak in the place of God; from the pulpit, there is his council-throne and seat of his profession; what he hath there said, they should follow that, and banish the vaine, wicked, reprobate Heretick from the City, that he may no more oppose the Holy Office or preaching; and bring the punishment of Corab Datham and Abiram upon the whole City. Accordingly the Lords consulted, and could not finde how they should justly help the master; fearing the vehemency of their preacher in his pulpit; and concluded to banish the innocent Jacob Behme out of the city, in which conclusion some men of the Council would not consent, but rose and went their way, but the rest execute, and by the executioners or city officers, cause the uncondemned faithful citizen, to be instantly banished out of the city. Which the patient blessed man disliked not; but answered in the name of God, my Lords, I will doe as you command and depart from the City; but may I not goe to my house first, and take mine along with me, or at least tell them my necessity? But they forbade it and denyed him, saying they could not alter the Sentence, which the whole Council had concluded, in which he instantly was to be led from the Council-house out of the City, with derision and scorn; then he said: Deare Sirs, let it be done seeing it cannot be otherwise: I am contented;

so he was banished and gone away all night long. But the morning following, when the Council were met together againe, and had reconciled their disagreement, they made another conclusion, to hunt after the persecuted Innocent man, and sent up and downe about the Country to seeke him, and at length found him, and brought him silemnly with honour into the City again, which was a wonder from God, in the midst of those acts and Decrees of the Devill. ¹
 This much is what I am certainly informed, that it was so done.

This confused account represents the melting together by Dr. Weisner of three separate episodes in Boehme's life: first, the story regarding the young baker which took place probably at Christmas time 1612; secondly, the story of the prdacher's denunciation of Boehme from the pulpit; and thirdly the story of Boehme's Banishment. Fortunately there are other sources for the second and third episodes. The Diarium of of Burgomaster Scultetus affords three entries which establish the proper chronology of the second episode. Under date of 26 July 1613 Scultetus wrote that the shoemaker, Jacob Boehme, who lived between the gates behind the hostel, was brought to the Rathaus for examination; that Boehme was questioned concerning his enthusiastic beliefs; that thereupon he was placed in the stocks, and as soon as Oswald (Krause) had fetched his Quarto book from his house was again released from prison, and advised to leave off such things. ² This was on a Friday. The next Sunday, Scultetus records that Richter preached a sharp sermon against Boehme. This was the Eighth Sunday after Trinity, the Sunday when the Gospel lesson is drawn from Matthew vii, 15-23,

¹ Weisner's Wahrhaftiger Relation, taken from the translation published in London, 1662. The Commonwealth spelling is retained.

² Jecht, Böhme, p.36, gives the German text of these entries in the Diarium of Scultetus.

and has to do with false prophets who come in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves. Tuesday, July 30, the Burgomaster records that the shoemaker was brought to the Primarius's house and vigorously examined in his beliefs¹ and warned not to continue his writings.

This seems the proper sequence of events for the second episode.

The third episode, ~~the~~ banishment, did not take place until 1624.

In any event, Boehme's first literary venture led him into trouble with both the ecclesiastical and the civil authorities. The Autograph ms of the Aurora was confiscated. He wrote that he

saw this first book no more in three years: I supposed that it was dead and gone, till a certain learned man sent me some copies of it, who exhorted me to proceed, and manifest my talent, to which the outward reason would by no means agree, because it had suffered so much already for it; moreover, the spirit of reason was very weak and timorous, for my high light was for a good while withdrawn from me, and it did glow in me as a hidden fire, so that I felt nothing but anguish and perplexity, within me; outwardly, I found contempt, and inwardly a fiery instigation. (Epist., xii, 13)

1 The entries in the Diarium of Scultetus read as follows: Anno 1613, Juli 26. Freitags wurde Jacob Böhme, ein Schuster zwischen dem Thore hinter dem Spitalschmiede zum Ablohn auf's Rathaus gefordert, und um seinen enthusiastischen Glauben willen gefragt darüber in Stock eingesetzt und sobald durch Oswalden (Krause) sein geschriebenes Buch in 4^o, aus seinem Hause geholt, darauf aus dem Gefängniss wieder entlassen, und ermahnt von solchen Sachen abzustehen. Anno 1613, Juli 28 Sonntag hielt Richter ein scharfe Predigt gegen ihn. Dienstag den 30 Juli wurde Jacob Böhme, der Schuster, vor den Predicanten in des Primarii Wohnung vorgefordert und in seiner Confession mit Ernst examinirt. The text in Fechner, Leben, is not exact. Cf. also G. Köhler, Görlitzer Wegweiser, 1837, #45, and Neumann, Geschichte von Görlitz, 1850, p.392.

V. THE AURORA

Open the Aurora and what do you find?

It is, to say the least, a primitive, profound, and poetic book, full of deep insights as well as of absurd ideas. In Boehme's own words it is a work of his spiritual childhood. (Epist., xii, 86) He says that it was written not according to reason but rather with a 'magical intuition', without full comprehension or understanding. It is certainly an ungainly work, incomplete, with the soteriological part unwritten, presenting only an inadequate picture of Boehme's first attempt at doctrinal expression. Yet the problems which Boehme felt called to deal with are by no means primitive for they are the most perplexing problems of philosophy. Koyré suggests that Boehme's central problem is the traditions problem of evil and of the relation of God to the world. With Boehme this is portrayed in the form of a threefold metaphysical insight: the intuition of freedom manifested in being; the intuition of spirit expressing itself in body; and finally the intuition of a double necessity of struggle or dialectical opposition both in being and in thought, the opposition of contraries which synthesize into life. This threefold intuition results first in a living God of whom the soul is an emanation, in a spirit who directly incarnates himself in being; and secondly it results in a living world wherein God lies hidden. Both of these intuitions posit the same problem of evil: how, if God is good, is He at the same

time the source of all reality; and secondly if evil is so visibly present in the soul, how can God also be present there.¹ And the solution to these problems which the Aurora envisages and which Boehme describes with increasing clarity in his later writings was already contained in his work of 1612.

This solution is in the Aurora certainly more pantheistic than mystical, unless mysticism is conceived of as a speculative metaphysics which transforms outer into inner, historical into eternal, and the processes of nature and History into the generation of the gods -- theogony.² When mysticism is thus conceived then the pantheizing tendencies of the Aurora form the first venture of Boehme's metaphysical speculation, a type of thought akin to Renaissance natural philosophy, the characteristic conception of which was the divine unity of the living all.³ Boehme, though, reveals no cleft between life and thought; evil was not purely negative,

1 Koyré, La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme, p.72.

2 Windelband, A History of Philosophy, p.366. Such a definition of mysticism accords with Schleiermacher's views in the Reden: 'It (mysticism) does not arise from being sated and overladen by external influences, but, on every occasion, some secret power ever drives the man back upon himself, and he finds himself to be the plan and the key of the whole. Convinced by a great analogy and a daring faith that it is not necessary to forsake himself, but that the spirit has enough in itself to be conscious of all that could be given from without, by a free resolve, he shuts his eyes forever against all that is not himself.' (Oman tr., London, 1893, pp.133-134) Here the Peripatetic-Stoic doctrine of the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm is viewed as the 'great analogy'. In the Renaissance this doctrine was revived by Weigel (One can know only what one himself is, a doctrine of his Gnothi Seauton which Boehme read), in Paracelsus, and in Boehme.

Windelband, op. cit., p.367.

the absence of good. It was a physical and moral quality, essentially necessary but existentially irrational. He wanted to probe the source (Quell) of dualism in nature, and his simplest solution would have been the Manichean -- the solution of the farmer who sees life as a ceaseless struggle with an unruly devil. If Boehme ever harboured this solution his piety rejected it. His God could not be maintained -- the omnipotent God who had created a good world filled with evil men, the God of the Lutheran church in Seidenberg and of Martin Moller's Conventicle. Thus, in the Aurora two tendencies appear, revealing an inner tension between them -- an empirical dialectic, so to speak -- for these two speculative trends may in the end prove irreconcilable. They are in sharp contrast and conflict: the one was the mystical piety of devotion; the other was Neoplatonic naturalism. The latter came to Boehme from Plato, Plotinus, and the Renaissance Platonists by way of Paracelsus, Weigel, and the humanist physicians of Silesia. The former came to Boehme from Eckhart,¹ Tauler, Suso, the Enbers, Mechthild,² Nicolaus of Strausburg, and the Theologia Germanica³ by way of Luther, Schwenkfeldt, and Martin Moller.⁴ And Boehme's primary problem was the reconciliation of the pantheizing tendencies of the one with the supranaturalistic dualism of the other.

1 Eckhart was unknown in Boehme's time, although Tauler was, and through Tauler the Meister's ideas were spread.

2 Cf. A.M. Heiler, Mystik deutsch Frauen im Mittelalter, Berlin 1929.

3 Siedel, Theologia Deutsch, ... Gotha, 1929

4 Tauler's prayers were printed in Moller's Meditationes sanctorum patrum. Cf. Bornkamm, Luther u Böhme, p. 77.

Luther's real devil was not at home in the Plotinian world.

The learned have had many disputations, questions, conceits, and opinions concerning the fierce malignancy and evil that is in all creatures in this world, and even in the very sun and stars; moreover, there are some so very poisonous and venomous beasts, worms, and vegetables in this world, that thereupon rational men have justly wondered, and some have concluded preemptorily, that God must have willed the evil also, seeing he hath created so much that is evil. (Aurora, xvi,35)

This is Boehme's speculative problem -- the old and still unsolved problem of theodicy. Boehme's God had not created evil:

The devil has taught men sorcery and witchcraft... Come on ye jugglers and sorcerers or witches, you that go a-wooing and a-whoring after the devil. Come to my school... I will show you how, with your necromancy or art, you are carried into hell... Poor man did not fall out of a resolved, purposed will, but through the poisonous infection of the devil, else there had been no remedy for him. (Aurora, xvi, 1,3; xvi, 38)

The Aurora, then, is not theology. Its author was intent upon other things. He wished to know the world, its eternal being and becoming, its divine birth. He wanted to know how from this divine birth of the world evil came to be. But he has little to say of Christ, nothing of salvation, although it should be remembered that the book is not finished and that these matters would certainly have come later. But the unfinished fragment is a pansophic book. It seeks the wisdom of the all, or pansophia:

Then what is yet concealed or remains hidden, the true doctrine of Christ? No; but the philosophy and the deep ground of God; the heavenly delightful habitation and pleasure; the revelation of the creation of angels; the revelation of the horrible fall of the devil, from whence,

1 Cf. Peuckert, Pansophia, pp. 428ff.

evil proceeds; the creation of this world; the deep ground and mystery of all creatures in this world; the Last Judgment and change of this world; the mystery of the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life.
(Aurora, ix,14)

These are the things that Boehme sets out to reveal in the Aurora, for he felt that a new vision of the world had been given him and that this vision of eternal nature was also a deeper knowledge of God. Nature was a book in which great mysteries were hidden (Epist.,x,36) and to probe this mystery was to do nothing else than to seek God within nature. For such a search the Holy Spirit is necessary (Aurora ii,13) for the Spirit is both in God and in the universal nature from which all things proceed. And **universal** nature is God's body (Aurora ii, 16,17,18) Yet because good and evil are in all things, one must not believe that

in God there is good and evil, for God Himself is the good, and hath no other name from God, which is the triumphing eternal joy; Only all the powers which you can search out in nature, and which are in all things, proceed from him. (Aurora, ii, 63)

Evil, then, does not come from God.

It has no substance in God...but He is a Spirit, in whom all powers are (Aurora ii,69) ... If God should be angry in Himself, then the whole nature would be afire (Aurora ii,64)... Thus all had its beginning (in God), even to the angels and the devils. (Aurora, ii,77)

God is thus already the coincidentia oppositorum, the reconciliation of contrasts, the identity of evil and good, the union of subject and object, the Supreme One. God is the exalted unity of opposites; an idea the consequences of which sometimes are theodicy and 'negative theology' which

express themselves in the creation of a theogonic series. How the harmony and joy of God's inner being became the divided world of creature and nature -- this hideous war infested world -- this is Boehme's problem in the Aurora, even though he had not yet come to the necessity of creating a full explanation in theogonic terms.

But is this mysticism? Does a speculative system which begins and ends in a God who is the coincidentia oppositorum have the right to be called mystical? If so, then Boehme was a mystic already in the Aurora. If not, then Boehme was simply speculating in the traditional lines of Neoplatonism. But in either event there two basic tendencies present in the Aurora. Of his own initiative and before he had heard of Paracelsus Boehme was bothered by the same philosophical problems as the Hohenheimer for with Paracelsus the nature-philosophical stream of German mysticism began. This nature 'Mysticism', wherein God reveals by working through and in His creation, is the Theologi Paracelsi which Weigel mentions in his Gnothi Seauton¹. This theology is native to Boehme though both his peasant's piety and his Lutheran faith rejected its pantheizing tendencies. The folk mind, educated into nature's stupidity as well as into its divinity, cannot comprehend the² separation of God and man, and of God and creation.

Here then are two basic impulses -- impulses grounded

1 Walterhausen, Paracelsus im Eingang der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte, Leipzig 1936, p.2.

2 F. Pfister, Deutsches Volksthum im Glauben und Aberglauben, Berlin 1936, p.53.

in Boehme's heart and soul -- there rests the basis of both the speculative mysticism and the devotional mysticism of the later writings. The Aurora represents an embryonic epitome of his thought, for, although the ideas may be more fully realized and better expressed in the later writings, they are the same ideas. One and the same inner dialectic motivates the Boehme of 1612 and of 1622. The two tendencies of the Aurora and the two eyes of the soul in Uebersinn. Leb. are much the same.

VI. THE PERIOD OF SILENCE: 1612-1619

A new life thus began for Jacob Boehme. He entered a new line of business, for on 12 March 1613 he had sold his shoemaker's bench to Georg Süssenbach¹ for 470 marks. The price shows that Boehme's shoe business had doubled in value since 1599 when he had bought it from Valentin Lange. In spite of the two recorded borrowings of 36 marks on 19 November 1605 and of 50 marks on 13 November 1610, his business seems to have been large and well managed.² These two borrowings were necessitated by the seasonal need of buying large stores of leather and thus were normal business transactions. After he had sold his shoemaker's bench he engaged in the linen goods business, in the interests of which he made yearly³ journeys to Prague and probably to the Leipzig Fair. He also dealt in woolen gloves, apparently buying them in the large⁴ from peasants and selling them retail in the markets. But Boehme's economic condition was dependent upon the general economic situation. Times were bad and things were steadily getting worse. The Taler was worth 68 crowns in 1566; in 1614 it was worth 92; in 1618, 186.⁵ War inflation and paper currency were prevalent, as was to be expected,

1 Kaufbuch, 1605ff, Bl.383. Cf. Jecht, Böhme, p.25.
 2 Jecht, op. cit., 25.
 3 Cf. Edition of 1715, Appendix, p.62f.
 4 Ibid.
 5 Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, pp.7-8.

and the rulers themselves sought to gain the necessary funds for their ambitions by any means at their control: Emperor Matthias sat in his castle at Prague trying to fill his treasury by boiling out gold and looking for his personal destiny in the stars and Cabbala.¹ The economic instability of the age is reflected in an incident which took place 10 October 1616 when Catharina Boehme, along with 17 other women, was prohibited from trading in cotton yarn in the streets. Fourteen days later Boehme himself was punished for this same offence.² Boehme was not forbidden from trading in yarn but only from peddling it in the streets from house to house, for the free and open peddling of yarn was a privilege of the free merchants.³ Thus, Boehme was not yet a free merchant.

In the last period of Boehme's life his economic circumstances were better than average. As long as the general economic picture was satisfactory, as long as trade moved freely through the Hanseatic cities, Boehme was a prosperous man. But crop failures, a rising standard of living, inflation and the devaluation of monies, the expectancy of war, and the terrible plague, ruined business conditions. Carl von Ender, Boehme's old friend, became his patron and sent him provisions from time to time.⁴

1 Peuckert, Die Rosenkreutzer, p.6.

2 Ratsprotokoll. 22 October 1616: Er soll inner 14 Tagen 10 Thaler zu Strafe niederlegeb, darinn, dass er zuwider eines ehrbaren Rates Verbot mit Garn gehandelt, und soll das eingekauften Garn in öffentlichen Markt allhier feilhaben, und nicht anderswo verwendet. Uedit am 5 November. Cf. Jecht, op. cit., p.24.

3 Cf. G. Auben, Die Leinwandsechen in Zittau, Bautzen, und Görlitz, n.p. 1915, p.596.

4 Epist., v,2; Epist., vi,1; at the end of 1618 and in May 1620 Boehme received wheat from Ender.

Rudolf von Gersdorf and Augustin Cöppen sent him food.¹
 Near the end of 1618 Boehme's father died and he shared in
 the inheritance with his brothers and sisters.² In Sept-
 ember 1620 he received money from Christian Bernhardt, pro-
 bably in return for permission to copy some of Boehme's manu-
 scripts.³ But times of scarcity had arrived, and Boehme fully
 understood the economic tendencies of his age:

Great wars, uproars, and insurrections, calamity and
 death will mightily fall in a short time. (Epist., xxxiv, 6)

The distress caused by the systematic deterioration of the
 currency, the abuse of the monetary media by the Kippers and
Wippers, nearly brought on insurrections among the lower classes
 both in town and country.⁴

Economic considerations were, however, no longer the
 primary aspect of Jacob Boehme's life. He was an established
 citizen of Wörlitz with a growing literary fame. Franckenberg
 relates in his De Vita et Scriptis a questionable story which
 illustrates Boehme's growing reputation as a seer:

The following anecdote is also worth relating, which
 I had from his own mouth. One day there came a stranger
 to his door, a man little in stature, cunning in his look
 and quick in his understanding. After an overture of
 civilities, he began by acquainting Jacob Boehme that,
 whereas he had been informed of his being endued with a
 singular spirit, such as is not to be met with in common,
 and it was incumbent upon every man, in all equity, to be

¹ Epist., xxxii,2 ; Epist., xxxiii,6; Epist., xxxvii;
Epist., lxv; Epist., lxvi,10.

² Schöpenbuch, Alt-Seidenberg, Bd.I. Cf Jecht, Böhme,
 p.1.

³ Epist., xxxiv,6.

⁴ The Cambridge Modern History, iv,7.

inclined to let his neighbours share in the good which had been communicated to himself; he, therefore, Jacob Boehme, should do him the favour of either bestowing the same singular spirit upon him, or of making it over to him (as in Simon Magnus' case) for a sum of money. Upon which, after a suitable return of civilities, Jacob Boehme, on his part, and by way of check, gave the man to understand, that, as he esteemed himself absolutely unworthy of the supposed extraordinary gifts and arts; so he found himself quite devoid of such as he, the stranger, might perhaps imagine him possessed of. That he could lay claim to nothing more than a life and conversation grounded upon the plain and simple Catholic faith in God, and the brotherly love to his neighbour; and in sum, that he was as little acquainted with as he was fond of any such singular, or as the stranger imagined, familiar spirit. But that, if he would needs be possessed of a spirit, he must take the very same course that himself had taken, which was, earnestly and sincerely to repent of his sins, fervently imploring the heavenly Spirit of Grace unto him; in which case He would surely give it to him, and thereby lead him into all truth. Which advice this poor besotted creature was so far from taking, that without much ado, yea, with an almost false magical conjuration he wanted to exhort the supposed familiar spirit out of Jacob Boehme till he, being chagrined in his spirit at such behaving, caught hold of him full in the face, meaning an imprecation upon a soul so perverse as this. Upon which the Conjuror, trembling and astonished, begged pardon, which made Jacob Boehme remit his zeal, and after a very serious and smart reprimand for, and advice against, such simony and devilism, immediately to dismiss and discharge him. 1

Thus Boehme's fame increased and the larger world in which he lived began to intrude into his quiet life.

But what was this larger world?

Luther's doctrine which had allowed the sword to the punitive magistrate had borne its logical fruit: the wars of religion. And the treaties of Passau (1552) and of Augsburg (1553) had brought no rest because they were not motivated by tolerant love but were grudgingly made by contracting parties of equal stubbornness, urged only by the necessity of brief

1 Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #22.

armistices in their bloody struggles. Creed followed creed, book followed book, dispute followed dispute in an almost endless procession of religious bickerings. The Saxon Elector, always consistent, opposed toleration of Calvinists and united with the Papists, whom he hated, to suppress the Zwinglians and the Phillipists. The dissensions which arose from the Variata and from the many interpretations of the Peace Treaties, sectarian divisions, exclusion of the Reformed from religious settlements -- these things made the age expectant of an ultimate solution to the religious question:¹

Deutschland soll von dreien Glauben nunmehr be-
halten einen;
Christus meint, wann wird er kummen, dürft er
alsdann behalten einen. 2

In Boehme's life-time these differences reasserted themselves with embittered violence, almost as if pen and speech were seeking to anticipate the coming decision by sword. Boehme's age, like the Platonic, Scholastic, and Renaissance epochs, was an age of intense but in a sense unnatural intellectualism, and mysticism³ is born as a revolt against tyrannous intellectuality. Mysticism then lay in the cradle of the Reformation, for within Lutheranism, sometimes along side of it, there was a striving towards the certification and the deepening of inner religious realities. But mysticism soon outgrew its cradle. Scholastic subtelties supplanted the plain and simple Christ. Dogma stifled

1 Francesco Ruffini, Religious Liberty, London 1911, p.211.

2 Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, p.3.

3 T. H. Hughes, The Philosophic Basis of Mysticism,
Edinburgh 1937, pp.41-42.

spirit, and the wrangling of the theologians bewildered the common folk:

Lutherisch, päptisch und Calvinisch, diese Glauben
alle Drei
Sind vorhanden, doch ist Zweifel, wo das Christen-
thum dann sei. 1

The age was enamoured of religious controversy and dangerous tendencies were abroad, for Lutheran and Calvinist alike had become more rigid and the radical opposition between them had developed into an everlasting combativeness and a search for definitive creeds. But these Confessional groups, while outwardly united against common foes, were themselves also inwardly divided. The various Reformed Churches excluded one another and the Lutherans were similarly divided between the orthodox and the Melancthonians. Famous controversies attracted attention: Hoë von Hohenegg, the Lutheran, denounced Abraham Scultetus, the Reformed theologian at ²Heidelberg.

All this religious struggle and theological disputation must not be dismissed as ineffectual and without consequence. As Luther had anticipated, this painful strife went deep into the heart of the laity, and at a practical and moving point: the ³Lord's Supper. The Reformation had changed the Supper from one of the keys to Heaven into an expression of inner faith; but this issue, although already decided in the theologians' minds, had not worked itself through to the hearts of the laity.

1 Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, p.3.

2 Vide; J.G.Walch, Einleitung in die Religions-Streitigkeiten, Jena 1734.

3 Geünhagen, Geschichte Schlesiens, Gotha 1886, p.99.

They still were troubled and perplexed.¹ In 1562 there had appeared one of the many Broadsides which expressed the popular discontent with religious disputation. It was entitled Von Grawlichen Missgeburten, and it explained that all which Luther, the third Elias, had prophecied would fail to transpire because of the alarming increase of Godless Papists, Epicureans, Sodomites, Schwärmgeister -- of all who wished to doubt. Blasphemy, cursing, vice and adultery, oppression of the poor were increasing. The trumpet call for the Judgment Day seemed² near at hand.

Indeed, men were rising up to claim that they themselves were the Second Christ. Elias Stiefel said that his nephew, Ezechiel Meth, was the New Adam send to redeem the world. These doctrines were presented in numerous tracts which flooded the age, particularly in Stiefel's Die Unterschiedliche Erklärung des ersten Menschen vor dem Fall / des andern nach dem Fall / und des dritten von oben aus Gott gebohrnen letzten Adams. In 1614 this Schwärmerey was condemned at Dresden and Stiefel was officially called fanaticissimus homo, quasi postliminio schismatico & infernali and his horrible asse³tions were repudiated in twenty articles by Electoral Decree.

The age seethed with unrest. Each new star brought new fear. When a new one flashed across the heavens between 1604-1606 Boehme's own devout pastor, Martin Moller, explained ~~that~~

1 Grunphagen, op.cit., p.100.

2 PRE³, xix, 23.

3 Peuckert, Die Rosenkreutzer, p.9.

its meanings were far more tragic than those of any comet¹ because it surpassed the comets in magnitude. Astronomy and astrology were vigorously pursued. And then the movement for Calendar reform did little to alleviate the unrest. Suspicions of Protestants were aroused by the Catholic insistence upon reform. Lutherans were emphatic: no reform was needed.

Superstition was rife: Magic, witchcraft, crimen magiae, existed in large degree. Even the Princes had fixed delusions: Christian of Denmark had visions; Johann Friedrich of Weimar² raved.

Personal life was degenerate: intemperance of eating and drinking, extravagance of dress, exorbitant usury, sexual vices, raucous living, plundering soldiery, filthy housing, barbaric³ manners were the rule.

And then of course the Jesuits dare not be forgotten. Frightening legends circulated: 'The Jesuits claim that Spanish gold from Peru and Pegu will finance His Most Catholic Majesty's ~~was~~ for world domination.' And the Pope, it was claimed, blessed! Did not the Jesuits pray publicly for increase of Spanish power? Did they not broach plans for the reconversion of Luther's Germany? They bribed Princes to betrayal. They provoked persecutions. They urged government by assassination. To the Saxon mind these legends of Spanish greed and Jesuit machination⁴ were true: Holland was proof enough.

1 Peuckert, Die Rosenkreutzer, p.12.

2 Cambridge Modern History, iv, p17.

3 Ibid., pp.8-11, et passim.

4 Peuckert, op. cit., pp.16ff. Further on the Jesuits, Cf. B. Duhr, Jesuiten Fabeln, Freiburg 1904.

With the Union of Protestant Princes under Frederick IV of the Palatinate at Anhausen in 1608, and with the Alliance of Catholic Princes under Maximilian of Bavaria at Liga in 1609, the unrest and tension of the Reformation had come to a head. Anxiety mounted as Europe divided itself into two camps and the question of the succession to the Duchies of Julich and Cleves, which arose in 1614, enlarged the Confessional Differences. The common man was bewildered. Certainty disappeared. Of one thing only was he sure: namely, that the world soon would end by breaking into a thousand pieces. This end of the world was variously calculated and the medieval speculations of the Abbot Joachim of Flora lived again.¹ Now it was learned that Joachim's mathematics had been in error. The Calabrian prophet had said that the new age-- the time of the Lily -- would come in 1260, but history had belied him. He should have begun his calculations with A.D. 325, with the 'Fall' of Christianity at Nicea and by Constantine. Thus 325 plus 1260 gave 1595:

Wer im 85 Jahr nit wird verderben
Und im 86 nit tut sterben,
In 87 nit wird erschlagen,
Und in 88 nit wird vergraben,
Der mag wohl in 89 von guten Tagen sagen. 2

Prognostications were Prevalent. Heinrich Raetel of Sagan, basing his prophecies on Daniel ii, 34-44, came to the conclusion that 1591 would see the end of the world:

1 D. 1202. Cf. Peuckert, Die Rosenkreutzer, pp.8-13.
Cf. also Ernst Benz, Ecclesia Spiritualis, Stuttgart 1934.
2 Peuckert, op.cit., pp.10-11.

Dies Königreich, Herr Jesu Christ,
 Das dein und keines andern ist,
 Wollst du anbrechen lassen bald,
 Inmitt der Weil dein Kirch erhalt,
 Gott sei gelobt in Ewigkeit! 1591. 1

Johannes Hilthemis suggested that 1606 would bring the final struggle of God and Magog, of Poyssel and Elias.² Others were frightened by the Elias prophecies which allowed the world 6000 years; but since the Jewish Calendar still lacked about 500 years of the full 6000, a passage from Matthew was introduced: 'Except those days be shortened... but for the elect's sake³ they shall be shortened'.

Thus Boehme's age was tense and expectant, awaiting the inevitable breakdown of the patterns of living. And this expectancy became a large factor in the life of the age. Men bitterly hated their world and longed for the world that Scripture promised. And all evidences of the new age, all hints of the coming doom, were seized upon with fervent joy. Blueprints of the new world order were popular: More's Utopia, Bacon's New Atlantis, the Rosenkreutzer books, etc. And Jacob Boehme shared both this hope and the tension which bred it, though he did refuse either to date the world's end or to blueprint the new age of the gracious Lily. The knowledge and facts of the world's end, he says, are secrets and it belongs not to man to make conclusions about them without the light of God. (Letzte Zeit, I,28)

1 Peuckert, Die Rosenkreutzer, p.11.

2 Ibid., p.13.

3 Boehme quotes this passage himself in Letzte Zeit I,30.

As Jacob Boehme traveled over Eastern Germany and the Kingdom of Bohemia -- the theatre of the first phase of the Thirty Years War -- he came in direct contact with this excited anxiety. 1 November 1619 he was in Prague for a week, at the time when the Elector Friedrich of the Palatinate, leader of the Protestants, visited the City:

I was present at the coming of the new King (Pfalzgraf Friedrich)... he came in at the fort upon Retshin of Shlan, and was received of all the Three Orders with great solemnity, as the custom has been formerly among all kings. I exhort you well... whether the time of the great expedition by not at hand upon the mountains of Israel in Babel (confused Christendom) especially in respect of the Siebenbürger (Bethlem Gabor) who should get help from the Turk, and very easily come to the river Rhine, where the great slaughter of the children of God will then come to pass. (1) where two great rods of God shall appear -- the one by war, the other by mortality, in which Babel shall be ruined... However, we know for certain the ruin of the City of Babel to be very nigh, and it appears to us as if the time was even instantly at hand, whereas yet we cannot fully apprehend the council of God, but as a pilgrim that is a day in a country cannot learn all, even so it is with us. For God keeps the time and hour to himself, and yet shows by His Spirit the wonders that are to come... However it be, the new AntiChrist (the worldly) does mightily triumph in the growth of the old (spiritual), and burns like a fire in juniper wood; it supposes it is joy; and a golden time, but it is misery and oppression, and Babel (confused Christendom) is of a flaming fire. (Epist., iv)

When Boehme went to Prague he knew that his own Province, Upper Lausatia, was more tightly¹ bound to Bohemia, Silesia, and Lower Lausatia than ever before. After the 'Union' of 1619, Upper Lausatia became an open ally, an affinity due in no small measure to the large Evangelical element there.

1 This slaughter did take place in the Rhineland, although not quite in the manner Boehme suggests.

2 H. Knothe, Der Anteil der Oberlausitz an den Anfängen des 30jährigen Krieges, 1618-1623, in 'Neues Lausitzisches Magazin', lvi 1890, pp.19ff.

The storm which Boehme had anticipated soon broke, for on the death of the doddering old Emperor Maximilian, 20¹ March 1619, the first phase of the Thirty Years War began. An election was held 22 August 1619 in which Upper Lausatia was outvoted by the other three eastern provinces.² Unrest increased. In Upper Lausatia the bourgeoisie revolted against the magistrates,³ and the villages ranged themselves against the towns. Evangelicals opposed Catholics, for the division was not only of Principality against Principality but also of neighbour against neighbour. Class tensions were aroused to a state of bitterness hitherto unknown.

The war came home to Görlitz and to Boehme. 10 March 1620 Ferdinand of Austria came from Breslau to Görlitz with an entourage of 329 persons and 436 horse.⁴ In a Letter to Christian Bernhard Boehme says that all of the houses were filled and that the Festival of Allegiance, the reason for Ferdinand's visit,⁵ was cut short by skirmishing near Lübe in Bohemia. During the summer skirmishing took place all about Görlitz and Boehme relates that most of Bohemia was laid waste.⁶ Soldiers were recruited and mercenaries enlisted in Upper Lausatia.⁷ 25 April the citizens of the towns were placed under arms.⁸

1 Arnold, Weingartens Zeittafeln und Ueberblicke zum Kirchengeschichte, Leipzig 1906, p.190.

2 Knothe, op. cit., p.23.

3 Ibid., p.30. In 1619 Boehme himself decided to disobey the magistrates and continue writing.

4 Epist., lxvii, 2.

5 Ibid., 3.

6 Ibid., 4.

7 Knothe, op. cit., p.44.

8 Ibid.

When English and Scottish soldiers passed through Upper Lau-
 satia in August they brought with them the fever,¹ and for
 six weeks thereafter Jacob Boehme was sick with what he called
der bösen Soldaten zugefügten Kranckheit.² 4 September the
 Congress of lesser nobility met in Görlitz and when the Saxon
 Elector took Bautzen the town swore allegiance to him.³
 Ferdinand of Austria manoeuvred Saxony, a Protestant Elector,
 onto the Catholic side, thus securing the quartering of Saxon
 soldiers in and about Görlitz.⁴ 9 September 1620 the Bohemian
 General, von Jägerdorf, made Görlitz his headquarters,⁵ and
 in September entrenchments were dug about the city and the
 citizens were commanded to win the grace of God by 'earnest
 prayer, faithful attendance at services, and repentant living'⁶
 Houses and bridges were destroyed. Soldiers plundered the
 citizens.⁷ Calvinistic services were allowed. Boehme subscribed
 his ninth letter thus: Der Name des Herrn ist eine feste Burg,⁸
 der Gerechte läuft dahin und wird erhöht. In the meantime,
 Frederick of the Palatinate had been defeated in Bohemia and
 had fled to England. The Saxon Elector now occupied Löbau and
 approached Zittau.⁹ The Silesians begged for mercy. As he

1 Knothe, op. cit., p.47.

2 Epist., xvii, l.

3 Knothe, op. cit., p.66.

4 Ibid., p.48.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p.67.

7 The cadences and even some of the words of the
 Palatine Calvinistic liturgy of 1535 appear in Boehme's Busse, 15,
 and the short form of confession in the same tract.

8 Epist., ix, 14b.

9 Knothe, op. cit., p.68.

passed through Görlitz on the way to Silesia the citizens implored his mercy and asked his love. With this event the direct affect of the wars upon Görlitz ceased and this in his last and most productive period of his life Jacob Boehme lived in peace within his own home.

Or, was it peace?

After Boehme's first book had been confiscated and after the Council had forbidden him further writing of books, Boehme endured a 'full Sabbath of years' (Apol. Richter 69) in silence. Such outwardly enforced silence was painful, disturbing. It served to discipline a mind that was at times chaotic; it helped to increase his speculative daring; and, in spite of the natural timidity of his soul, it lighted the fires of courage in his heart. But spiritually it was a distressing period. Boehme's pen -- yes, not only his pen but his God -- was silent. It was, significantly, that period of spiritual dryness characteristic of all mystics, that dismal waste of life which precedes all great periods of mystical achievement. Thus his

high light was for a good while withdrawn from me, and it did glow in me as a hidden fire, so that I felt nothing but anguish and perplexity within me; outwardly I found contempt, and inwardly a fiery instigation, yet I was not able to comprehend it until the breath of the most High did help me. (Epist., xii,13)

Further:

I purposed likewise (after the persecution) not to write any more, but only to keep myself still in obedience to my God, and to let the devil roar over me with his scorn, revilement, and derision, in which many a hard combat was fought against him, and what I endured I cannot tell or

declare; but it went with me as with a grain that is sown in the earth, which, against all reason, springs up afresh in all storms and tempests; whereas in the winter all seems as dead, and reason saith, Now all is gone. Thus the precious grain of mustard seed sprung up again under all dispraise, contempt, disdain, and derision, as a Lily, and returned with an hundred-fold increase, and also with a deeper and more peculiar knowledge, and came forth again as a fiery instigation or forcible driving. But my external man would write no more; it was somewhat discouraged and timorous, till it came so far that the internal man did captivate and overpower the external, and even then the Great Mystery did appear, and then I understood God's Counsel, and cast myself upon His will; also I would not invent or feign anything out of reason, neither would I give way and place any more to reason; but ~~resigned~~ ~~my~~ will to God's will, so that my reason might be as it were dead, that He (the Spirit of God) might do and work what and how he pleased: I willed nothing in reason, that it might be alone His will and deed. (Epist., x, 6ff)

The persecution did not extinguish Boehme's desire to understand, with God's help, the mysteries of existence. This was the 'fiery instigation' which drove him on. The desire to investigate was not silenced even though the recording of the results of his 'investigations' ceased.

The Jacob Boehme who had written the Aurora was not the simple, unlettered man that some would have us believe, for, like his great contemporary, Johann Arndt, there was somewhat of the Faust in him. Boehme liked to minimise the effect that other writers had upon him.

So neither can I say anything of myself, nor boast nor write anything; save this: that I am a simple man, and besides, a poor sinner, and have need to pray daily, Lord, forgive our sins; and to say with the Apostle, O Lord, Thou hast redeemed us with Thy blood. (Aurora, Preface.)

This is a religious attitude. Boehme was well-read, yes, perhaps even deeply read, in contemporary scientific and theological literature, and this according to his own witness:

I have read the writings of very high masters, hoping to find therein the ground and true depth; but I have found nothing but a half-dead spirit, which in anxiety travails... (Aurora, x,27)

Dear Reader, I understand the astrologers' meanings and sayings full well, and I have perused their writings also, and taken notice how they describe the course of the sun and stars, neither do I despise it, but for the most part, hold that to be good and right... I have not my knowledge by study; indeed I have read the order and position of the seven planets in the books of the astrologers, and find them to be very right. (Aurora xxv,43ff)

Even though he was open-minded to the discoveries of his scientific contemporaries -- perhaps even read Copernicus and Kepler -- their speculations did not disturb his own calm confidence in the religious and mystical gnosis which his experience had yielded him. He knew of the circulation of the blood (Aurora ii,7); he was conversant with Copernican ideas (Aurora xxv,43). But these and other scientific facts did not deter him from his relentless pursuit of the key of all knowledge -- a religious key:

Though I have not studied nor learned their arts, neither do I know how to go about to measure their circles; I take no great care about that. However, they will have so much to learn from hence, that many will not comprehend the ground thereof all the days of their lives. I have no use for their tables, formulae, schemes, rules and ways, for I have not ~~learned~~ learned from them, but I have another teacher or schoolmaster, which is the whole or total nature. From that whole nature, with its innate, instant birth of geniture, have I studied and learned my philosophy, astrology, and theology: For I find that for the most part they stand upon the right ground, and I will diligently endeavour to go according to their rules and formulae. For I must needs say that their scheme of formulation is my master; from it I have the first elements of my knowledge, and it is not my purpose to controvert or amend their formulae but rather leave them where they are. I will not, however, build upon their ground, but as a laborious, careful servant I will dig away the earth from the root, that thereby men may see the whole tree, with its root, stock, branches,

twigs, and fruits, and they may also see that my writing is no new thing, but that their philosophy and my philosophy are one body, one tree, nearing one and the same fruit.' (Aurora xxii, 10-15)

This witness must be supplemented by Boehme's hatred of the arrogant and self-sufficient learning of the schools, for his piety could not tolerate the corrupted knowledge of the learned:

Neither have I any command to bring in complaints against them, to condemn them for anything, except for their wickedness and abominations, as pride, covetousness, envy, and wrath, against which the spirit of nature complains very exceedingly, and not I: For what can I do, that am poor dust and ashes, also very weak, simple, and altogether unable? Only the Spirit shows this much: that to them is delivered and entrusted the weighty talent, and the key; and they are drowned in the pleasures of the flesh, and have buried their weighty talent in the earth, and have lost the key in proud drunkenness. The spirit has a long time waited in them, and importuned them that they would once open the door, for the clear day is at hand; yet they walk up and down in their drunkenness, seeking for the key, when they have it about them, though they know it not; and so they go up and down in their proud and covetous drunkenness, always seeking about like the country man for his horse, who all the while he went seeking for him was riding on the back of that very horse he looked for. Thereupon the spirit of nature, seeing they will not awake from their sleep and open the door, I will therefore do it myself. What could I, poor, simple, layman, teach or write of their high art, if it were not given me by the spirit of nature, in whom I live and am? (Aurora xxii, 16-20)

Boehme had read enough of secular science to give him the 'scheme of formulation' and the 'first principles' of his knowledge, as well as a deep distrust of science and an understanding of its severe limitations and truncated field.¹

This Faustian tradition came to Boehme from his own neighbours and friends, for Silesia, and especially Görlitz

¹ This statement was made in 1612 and must therefore be qualified by a strict examination of Boehme's later works. From an examination of his work after 1619 it becomes evident that he learned more from contemporary science than the 'first principles' of his knowledge. He used science, even building upon it.

became after 1580 the center of alchemical studies, particularly among physicians whose religious affinities were to Caspar Schwenkfeldt.¹ In 1589 Elias Schadeus had brought together² the Silesian Schwenkfeldians and the followers of Paracelsus. The following men were leaders: Balthasar Flöter and Francis Kretschmeyer in Sagan; Johann Huser and Paul Linck in Glogah; Marcius Ambrosius in Niesse.³ Görlitz was the center of an especially large group: Christopher Manlius, Johann Rothe, Balthasar Walter, Tobias Kober, Michael Kurtz, and the Burgo-master Scultetus.⁴ These physicians and students were alchemists in but a limited sense for they were not gold cooks in the medieval sense, but physicians and philosophers who found the 'first principles' of their speculations and theories in Neoplatonic metaphysics.⁵

The man who served as the direct mediator of Paracelsian alchemy to Jacob Boehme was his close friend and family physician, Tobias Kober of Görlitz. Kober was of an old family. He had studied in Basel and was the author of a book bearing the title Observationes Castrenses.⁶ In view of the intimacy of the letters which Boehme wrote to Kober from Dresden in 1624 it may be assumed that Boehme loved and trusted his physician. Indeed, while Boehme was in Dresden, Kober cared for Boehme's

1 Hans Heckel, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur in Schlesien, p.164.

2 Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, p.225.

3 Peuckert, Pansophia, pp.524-525. Cf. also, Leben, pp. 50ff.

4 Heckel, op. cit., p.164.

5 That a medical theory is implied in Boehme's thought is clear from the fact that Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, was a student of Boehme.

6 Peuckert, Leben, p.69.

family; he was the executor of Boehme's will; and he sheltered the widow Boehme and her children after Boehme's death.¹

There can be no doubt that Kober was Boehme's constant companion and confidant, and that the ideas of the Basel school of Paracelsus were mediated to Boehme by Kober.

Another Görlitz alchemist was Johann Rothe, sonderbarer Alchemist und Adeptus, and Rothe stood in close friendship to Boehme. Rothe was acquainted with Tauler and Arndt's writings, and he may have told Boehme about them.² Also Michael Kurtz, medicinae candidatus et practicus,³ assistant to Dr. Kober, composed a eulogy on Boehme's death. Burgomaster Scultetus was also a student of Paracelsus, and editor with Johann Huser from Glogau of an edition of Paracelsus's works. Huser's son, also named Johann, was the addressee of Boehme's 47th Epistle, one of the most alchemical and abstruse of Boehme's writings.

In the circle of Boehme's immediate friends there was, then, a group of men acquainted with Paracelsian ideas. But one man stands out above the rest:⁴ Balthasar Walther. Walther was in Görlitz already in 1587 and 1588, for several entries in the Diarium of Bourgomaster Scultetus prove Walther's close

1 Jecht, op. cit., pp.57,58.

2 Ibid., p.58.

3 Ibid., p.59.

4 Three entries in the Diarium of Bourgomaster Scultetus mention Walther as being from Liegnitz, while Franckenberg says that he came from Gross-Glogau. (Jecht, op. cit., pp.63 and Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #17) Scultetus was probably right.

relationship with the Paracelsian students.¹ Walther had traveled in the Orient in 1592-1599, visiting Polant, Wallacia, Greece, Syria, Egypt, and after his return to Görlitz he published an account of his travels on Rhambau's press in Görlitz.² This work was dedicated to the revered Bourgomaster of Görlitz, Scultetus, and to the Schwenkfeldian patriarch of Hennersdorf, Sebastian Hoffmann, an indication of the closeness of the ties between Paracelsian students and the followers of Caspar Schwenkfeldt.³ Walther became acquainted with Jacob Boehme in 1617 and spent three months in Boehme's house during 1618, most likely learning to know Jacob Boehme through the activity of Carl von Ender, the nephew of Hoffmann.⁵ Walther was Boehme's strangest friend, a man entirely typical of his age, strangely learned, dabbling in alchemical and occult arts, and a theologian. In 1620 he became the Director of the Chemical Laboratory in Dresden, and the physician of the Prince of Anhalt.⁶ In 1622 he was in Lüneburg, where he became acquainted with the north German Liebhabern der Weisheit.⁷ In 1624, in association with Morsius, he published a zauberische book in Lübeck along with Morgenröthe der Väter and other works.⁸

1 Jecht, Böhme, p.63.

2 Balthazari Waltheri vera Descriptio rerum ab Dno Jon Michaele Mold. Transalp. S. Walchiae Duce et Platina Gestarum. Cf. Peuckert, Leben, p. 100.

3 Koyré, La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme, p.48,n.6.

4 Mehrere Merckwürdigkeiten, #46.

5 Peuckert, Leben, p.100.

6 Ibid., p.100.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

What did Balthasar Walther teach Boehme during the three months which he spent in the house by the Neiss gate? In the 1652 edition of Boehme's works, edited by Gregory Richter, the son of the Pastor Primarius, there is a reference to the nature of the subjects which Walther and Boehme discussed. It is said that Boehme's idea of the Philosophical Globe, a part of Seel. Frag., came from a conversation which Boehme had with ¹Walther, and that Walther had learned it from Reuchlin. And Reuchlin's De Arte Cabalistica does have this philosophical globe. It is therefore certain that Jacob Boehme learned to know the Cabala from Balthasar Walther. Yet it seems certain that Boehme knew only the contents of the Cabala and not the name for the doctrine. The name came later. But Walther certainly gave Boehme the idea of the androgynous Adam Cadmon of the Cabalists, as well as the doctrine of the Ungrund, for the Ungrund is really nothing more than a development of the Cabalist's ²En Soph. Perhaps Walther also brought Boehme other occult teachings, for in Gnadenwahl Boehme mentions the Fourth Book of Esra, a work popular with the Cabalists. (Gnad., xi,21)

The 'Seven Year Sabbath' which Boehme was forced to undergo, in addition to deepening his speculation and bringing him in contact with the occult sciences, also brought him a coterie of friends -- men of broad experience and wide knowledge who exercised a significant influence upon his mind.

¹ This Richter source is quoted in Mehre Historische Merckwürdigkeiten in the 1715 edition. Cf. Peuckert, Leben, p.101.

² Cf. Peuckert, Leben, p.101, quoting from Don Georg Morhof, Polyhistor, 1732, T.III, Lib. V, #36--II, III, p.55. Peuckert also lists the passages in Boehme which recall the Cabala. Cf. Leben, p.177.

Just how thus Boehme circle came into being is not certain, but the probability is that it was again Carl von Ender, Boehhme's early friend and patron, who was the chief Boehme missionary, winning a solid group of friends for the shoemaker.

In July 1618 Boehme became acquainted with Cornelius Weisner, a physician at Lauban through a merchant tailor, Libor-¹ium Schneller, and with Solomon Schröter, a clergyman. With the beginning of 1619 Boehme began corresponding with an interesting group of men, mainly the physicians and lesser nobility of the Lausitz and Silesia. Most of these Epistles of Boehme to his friends have survived, but the letters of the friends to Boehme have not.² It was these men who formed the circle of disciples which ~~dyring~~ during the last few years of his life had a significant influence upon Boehme's spirit.

When in 1613 Boehme had promised the Town Council that he would cease writing books, the magistrates had asked a similar silence in the pulpit on the part of Gregory Richter. But the Pastor Primarius had continued his attacks with more false accusations, making Boehme out a fool. (Epist., liv, 6) Richter also had circulated a copy of Boehme's Aurora in strange places, where it was copied oft and viewed with 'other eyes than he (Richter) viewed it'. (Epist., liv, 7) Thus it circulated from einer Stadt zur andern, among many of the learned, including

1 Weisner was Praeceptor to the children of Lord of Schweidnitz, Balthasar Tilken. This is significant, for it explains how Tilke came to know Boehme, and thus how the two Apologies were written.

2 Cf. Appendix I, #5, for collated list of Epistles.

physicians and members of the nobility. Not only did these men transcribe it, but they wrote to Boehme, and some even came to his house, to beg him continue his writing, arguing that he had no right to hide his high gifts in silence and that it was incumbent upon him to communicate his gifts to his fellow men. (Epist., liv,8). And Boehme undertook to answer the questions which these learned put to him, not intending to write books for general circulation but merely answering them in private, replying to what had been asked of him (Epist., liv,9). This is an important consideration in ascertaining why it was that Jacob Boehme again took up his pen in defiance of the ruling of the Görlitz magistrates and the persecution of Gregory Richter. His 'external man', as he says, was content to allow the devil to roar over him. He endured many combats. But when he found friends in the external world who encouraged him to continue his writing, then his 'external man' was eager to continue:

And when this was done, then the internal man was armed, and got a faithful guide, and to him I wholly yielded my reason, and did not study or invent anything, neither did I give reason leave to dictate what I should write, save only that which the Spirit did show me as in a great mystery and full chaos in the Mystery. (Epist., x,8)

This encouragement, perhaps even adulation, which Boehme received from the lesser nobility of the Lausitz, those friends which Carl von Ender had won for him, was certainly an important factor in Boehme's desire to take up his pen again and write.

Yet Boehme had been planning to continue his writing soon after the Aurora was taken from him in incompleated form, for in the Vorrede, which was probably written in 1615, he had said that

That which you do not find sufficiently explained in this book, you will find more clearly in the Second and Third Books. (106)

He was thus planning to continue for he certainly considered his Aurora merely a childlike beginning (Epist., xviii,13) wherein great secrets were still very deeply hidden in mystery. (Epist.,x,36) And to reveal these secrets he felt called by God.

But what were these secrets?

During this Seven Year Sabbath Boehme had been brought into contact with Paracelsus, with the old aströlogers and with the alchemists. Yet when he speaks of 'astrology' his meaning is not that of the twentieth century for, like his contemporaries, Boehme understood by this word the study of the natural world.¹ And 'alchemy' was conceived as embracing the whole field of scientific endeavour.² And Jacob Boehme was both alchemist and astrologer.

Already in the twenty-second chapter of the Aurora Boehme's relationship to alchemy is clear. He shows there that his seven spirits of God, his theogony, as well as his seven natural principles, the dialectical life cycle -- fundamental ideas in his speculation -- derive from the seven

1 Peuckert, Leben, p.48.

2 Ibid.

stations in the alchemical process of transmutation. This identification of alchemical processes with regeneration has a Biblical basis.¹ Evil, both in nature and in the soul, was supposed to be able to be removed by a process similar to the 'sevenfold meltings'. Boehme, however, denied empirical knowledge of experimentation:

Do not take me for an alchemist, for I write only in the knowledge of the Spirit, and not from experience. Though indeed I could here show something else, viz., in how many days and in what hours, these things might be prepared; for gold cannot be made in one day, but a whole month is requisite for it, because I know not how to manage the fire; neither do I know the colours or tinctures of the qualifying spirits in their outer-most birth or geniture, which are two great defects. (Aurora, xxii, 104)

Boehme's alchemy did not consist in his acceptance of the physical-chemical categories of his age. Much of our modern difficulty in understanding books like his Signatura Rerum, his major alchemical work, comes from our misunderstanding of the goals of Seventeenth Century science. These men were cooking for gold because they were trying to understand and explain the reality underlying the universe.² And the problem as they conceived it was not simple. If God is hidden in material substance, then, when matter burns, what happens to God? Does this deus absconditus consume himself? When a tree grows, does this hidden God grow? Look at burning wood! What is happening? The alchemist said that the burning

1 Psalm xii,6: The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

2 Aurora, xxii,106.

substance was sulphur-like, the smoke was mercury-like, and the ashes salt-like. These three elements, Grundsubstanzen, were in all reality and to seek to change baser into higher these elements had to be understood in the centrum of their natures. The trinitarian formula was thus introduced into substantial reality. Another of the propositions of alchemy was that the lower is the image of the higher. Sulphur, mercury, and salt correspond to the trinitarian life of God and to the threefold life of man. As Angelus Silesius says:

Dass Gott dreieinig ist, zeigt dir ein jedes Kraut:
Da Schwefel, Salz, Merkus in einem wird geschaut.¹

Sobald durch Gottes Feur ich mag geschmeltzet sein,
So drückt mir Gott alsbald sein eigen Wesen ein.²

When the process of substantial transmutation is thus understood, then the birth and generation of the triune God is also known. Man's rebirth also becomes clear:

Der heilige Geist der schmelzt, der Vater der verzehrt,
Der Sohn ist die Tinktur, die Gold macht und verklärt.³

With these presuppositions, alchemy is less disturbing, more closely related to the mystical and religious quests of man's heart.

Even though Boehme denied experimental knowledge of alchemy he did make the seven stations in the alchemical process the basis of his theogony, cosmology, and of the schemes

1 Cherubinischen Wandersmann, I, 251.

2 Ibid., I, 104.

3 Ibid., I, 246.

of regeneration in the earlier writings. But he profoundly altered their psychological implications. When his seven spirits of God and his seven natural principles are compared with the seven stations in the alchemical process, then the thorough-going character of Boehme's change is clear. He certainly shared alchemical presuppositions even in the Aurora; he believed, as did also Leibnitz, that knowledge of alchemical writings was introductory to the theologia mystica. Like Andreae, Comenius, and Helmont he believed that the cosmos was God's body, and that the goal of regeneration was the reunion of the contradictions within existence, and that these contradictions might be overcome by some sort of a transmutation process.¹ He saw, though, that the secret of this process, the lapis philosophorum of the alchemists, was the cornerstone which the builders rejected:

Dein Stein, Chymist, ist nichts; der Eckstein,² den ich mein,
Ist meine Goldtinktur und aller Weisen Stein.

There can be no doubt that already in the Aurora Boehme's ideas of salvation were formed about the idea that salvation was a process similar to the transmutation process of alchemy. Alchemy sought to arrive at the tincture by a process consisting of distillatio,³ solutio, putrefactio, nigredo, albedo, rubedo, and projectio,⁴ a process quite different from the seven stages of creation as Boehme describes them in Mysterium Magnum.

1 Peuckert, Leben, p.56.

2 Cherubinischer Wandersmann, I,280.

3 Peuckert, Leben, pp.166; Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, pp. 81ff, 85ff, 112, 117f, 155ff.

4 Mysterium Magnum, ipviii. Cf. Brinton, The Mystic Will.

To say that Boehme was an alchemist is not enough, for he was the last of the alchemists because he changed what had been a chemical search into a religious quest. Indeed, the inner decay of alchemy began not with the Enlightenment but with Jacob Boehme.¹ Jacob Boehme was an alchemist in but a limited sense, although during these years of silence he came into contact with their traditions and writings.

Now, just what did Boehme learn from the scientists, if such they may be called, and from the tradition that they represented? In his own words, 'their scheme of formulation was my master' and from them 'I had the first elements of my knowledge.'² (Aurora, xxii, 11ff.) Paracelsus himself gives the key to the speculative mysticism of German natural philosophy in the Prologue to his Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis, et salamandris:³

There is more than that which is comprehended by the light of nature, something which stretches and lies beyond, something which cannot be grounded in the light of nature. It is grounded in the light of man which is above nature. For nature produces a light by which she may be known in her own character; but in humanity there is also a light beyond the light which by nature is within man -- a light by which man experiences, learns, and understands supernatural things. Those who search in the light of nature speak about the natural light; those who search in the light of humanity, they speak beyond nature. For man is more than nature; he is nature; but he is also spirit; he is an angel, having all three properties. If he is spiritual he serves the spirit. If he is an angel, he

1 C.G.Jung, The Integration of Personality, New York 1939, p.205f. Cf. Ch.V. 'The Idea of Redemption in Alchemy'. Jung discovers different alchemical stations than does Peuckert.

2 Peuckert, after detailed examination, concludes that Boehme read Paracelsus's Azoth and De Pestilente; Cf. Leben,

3 Colberg, Platonisch-hermetisch Christenthum, I, 314. says that Erasmus Francisci, in his Gegenstrahl der Morgenröthe has found more than 30 passages where Boehme uses the exact words of Paracelsus.

serves angels. The first is corporeal; the second is of the soul, the soul's cloak. In so far as man has a soul he is supernatural; but to experience what is not in nature. But to know and to understand hell -- the devil's Kingdom. So also does man understand heaven and its substance, namely God and His Kingdom. * 1

Alchemy operated in the sphere of the light of nature, but even here the idea of the unio mystica was involved, for as Angelus Silesius says

Dann wird das Blei zu Gold, dann fällt der Zufall hin
Wann ich mit Gott durch Gott in Gott verwandelt bin.²

Or again:

Betrachte das Tingiren, so siehst du schön und Frei,³
Wie dein Erlösung und wie die Vergötting sei.

The object of knowledge sought in the 'light of nature' was ultimately the same as that sought in the 'light of grace'. Only the methods differed. The former method was the alchemical process of transmutation; the latter mystical regeneration. Yet the Neoplatonism of Paracelsus was not wholly like that of the Italian Renaissance for older, more natively German elements entered into it.⁴ There was German folk tradition of healing and of magic! There was Faust. Gunholf has shown the⁵ existence of a Platonic tradition in German thought, the tradition of Hermes Trismegisthos and of the pseudo Albertus

1 Quoted by Peuckert, Pansophia, p.209.

2 Angelus Silesius, Cherubinischer Wandersmann, I,102.

3 Ibid., I,258.

4 Peuckert, Pansophia, p.227.

5 Gunholf, Paracelsus, Berlin 1927, pp.69,70.

¹
 Magnus. This nature mysticism was not the tending of ovens
 nor the distillation of tinctures, for these were mystical
 activities in that they were seeking to show the way of
 union with God through nature.² The basis of this speculation
 was not the relationship of God to the soul, but more, the
 relationship of God to nature.³ Paracelsus's teachings thus
 were confirmed in Boehme's heart, affirming one of the two
 empirical tendencies present in the Aurora.⁴ Both Ficino
 and Paracelsus had spoken of these two 'lights': the light
 of nature and the light of Grace. Both of them were ways,
 or 'lights' of knowledge.⁵ The way of the light of nature
 was knowledge of the Creator through his Creation, while the
 way of the light of Grace was the direct one of the mystical
 vision through rest and sinking into God. But even this rest
 was a form of knowledge, although on an altogether different
 plane than the knowledge sought by the alchemists. Paracelsus
 held that the light of Grace far superceded the light of nature,
 but even in the latter God was still pursued within the
 restless, manifold dialectic of existence.

In addition to this basic distinction between the light
 of nature and the light of grace Boehme also received several
 other important doctrines from the Alchemists. The most

1 Cf. the widely read book of folk medicine: Albertus Magnus bewährte und approbierte sympathetische und natürliche Geheimnisse für Menschen und Vieh... In many editions.*

2 Walterhausen, Paracelsus... p.1.

3 Ibid.

4 Cf. supra, p.76.

5 Peuckert, Pansophia, p.210.

6. Ibid.

distinctive of these was the doctrine of the signature, the idea that if one wishes to understand man he must know that he is made from God, Heaven, and Earth. This God is present in each one of the three essences, and He can be known through each one of them. Boehme also seems to have followed the psychology of Paracelsus, for he held that man's nature was threefold.

Paracelsus's spirit was congenial to Boehme's folk soul. He sought to rescue science and religion from the distortions of the schools.¹ His philosophy had grown more from the inarticulate piety of the folk than from humanism for the faculties of the Universities had not been able to eradicate primitive medicine and faith-healing.² The cosmos was considered a mighty battlefield of living forces, and the prerequisite for final harmony was a thorough understanding of these forces, and then, of course, their defeat.³ The devo; had to be beaten down in every manifestation of his power and the physician, Paracelsus believed, was a front-line soldier in this battle. But ultimate harmony again would reign for God was the Alpha and the Omega of knowledge. His Kingdom was nature, and the way of reunion was through nature.⁴ And the Beruf of the physician was therefore a religious one, Linked with this religious medicine there was the Verfallsidee, the idea that man's education, learning, and civilization had

1 Walterhausen, Paracelsus..., p.5.

2 Erich-Beitl, Wörterbuch der deutschen Volkskunde, Leipzig 1936, p. 771.

3 Walterhausen, op.cit., p.9.

4. Ibid.

corrupted him.¹ In Paracelsus and in Boehme there was no Erasmian humanism -- an aesthetic discontinuance of life for the purpose of reuniting a pure classicism with a purified Biblical knowledge.² On the contrary, there was the dynamic eschatology of Joachim of Flora with its moving ideal of fall and reformation.³ The Franciscan 'reform' had left a strong impression on the folk soul, setting the piety of the peasant in ant~~is~~scholastic tendencies. The Anabaptist Buchstaben oder Geist controversy was symptomatic.

Finally, Paracelsus had seen, nearly a century before Boehme, that in all things there was both good and evil.⁴ But neither Paracelsus -- nor Schwenkfeldt nor Weigel, who also saw such duality in reality -- saw what Boehme did: that the goal of this duality was its resolution within man himself and within a redeemed nature. This was Boehme's mystical insight -- his Innerlichkeit! Paracelsus knew that nature would be saved because she was God's body. But Boehme, in the triumphing experience recorded in the sixth Chapter of the Aurora, had seen this harmony which he said could only be compared to the resurrection from the dead. But it must be remembered that between Paracelsus and Boehme there was Luther with his doctrine of original sin. Boehme was heir of both. He saw that man -- the natural man with his inherited sin -- must get another body;

1 Walterhausen, op.cit., p.10.

2 J. Huizinga, Erasmus, Basel 1928, pp.117-119.

3 Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, pp.25ff. Cf. also, Benz, Ecclesia Spiritualis, passim.

4 'Nun befindet sich augenscheinlich in der Welt, dass zwei Art seiend, gute und böse, in allen Dingen.' Quoted from Paracelsus by Peuckert, Leben, p.54.

he must be born again.¹ The difference between Paracelsus and Boehme was simply Luther: Paracelsus had seen only the night of nature and his light of Grace was dim and unconvincing.² He was a humanist. This is why Boehme had said:

I will not... build upon their ground, but as a laborious servant I will dig away the earth from the root. (Aurora, xxii,11)

It has been shown that Boehme read an anonymous work with the title, De Secretis Creationis, a work which was a part of the Huser edition of Paracelsus. Peuckert has found parallel passages between this book and Boehme, especially the Signatura Rerum.³ In this anonymous work the three alchemical Grundsubstanzen -- Sulphur, Mercury, Salt -- were associated with the medieval threefold scheme of purgation, illumination, and union.⁴ Yet they do not stand in dialectical relationship, as do Boehme's.

These are some of the things which Jacob Boehme learned from his alchemical friends during the years between the confiscation of the Aurora in 1613 and the renewal of his literary activity in 1619. But not only did he learn from Paracelsus; he felt that he had a fiery instigation within his own being, a deep-rooted driving to describe both the being of God and the nature of man's sin:

1 Peuckert, Leben, p.55.

2 Perhaps the rediscovery of the theological writings of Paracelsus might force us to adopt another conclusion.

3 Peuckert, Leben, p.56.

4 Ibid., p.164.

I saw this first book no more in three years; I supposed that it was dead and gone, till a certain man sent me some copies of it, who exhorted me to proceed, and manifest my talent, to which the outward reason would by no means agree, because it had suffered much already for it; moreover, the spirit of reason was very weak and timorous, for my high light was for a good while withdrawn from me, and it did glow in me as a hidden fire; so that I felt nothing but anguish and perplexity within me; outwardly I found contempt, and inwardly a fiery instigation; yet I was not able to comprehend that light till the breath of the most High did help me again, and awakened a new life in me, and then I obtained a better style of writing, also a deeper and more grounded knowledge: I could bring everything better into outward expression... thus now I have written, not from the instruction or knowledge received from men, not from the learning or reading of books; but I have written out of my own book which was opened in me... and therein have I studied... I have no need of any other book. My book hath only three leaves, the same are the principles of eternity... I can find therein the foundation of the world and all mysteries; yet not I, but the spirit of God, doth it according to the measure, as He pleaseth. For I have besought and begged of Him many hundred times, that if my knowledge did not make for His glory, and conduce to the mending and instruction of my brethern, He would be pleased to take it from me, and preserve me only in His love; yet I found that by my praying or earnest desiring I did only enkindle the fire strongly in me; and in such inflammation, knowledge, and manifestation I made my writings. (Epist., xii, 13ff.)

Here there are hints of another great 'awakening' that took place sometime before 1619. It produced an irresistible inner drive and a certainty that the learning of the world was wrong. Boehme felt that he knew more what the learned should investigate than the learned themselves:

It behooves the Doctor, if he would be a Doctor, to study the whole process, how God has restored the universal in man; which is fully clear and manifest in the person of Christ from His entrance into the humanity, even to his ascension, and to the sending of the Holy Ghost. Let him follow the entire process, and then he may find the universal, provided he be born again, of God; but the selfish pleasure, worldly glory, covetousness and pride lie in the way. Dear Doctor, I must tell you, the coals are too black, you defile your white hands therewith. (Sig. Rer., x, 10-11)

The theologians

wrangle and contend about the church, yet none will take care of the poor forsaken mother of Christ. They ~~are~~ mad in their martial and mercurial ~~contest~~... they are wolves and lions, bears, yea, foxes and fearful hares... they continually contend, wrangle, grin, and bite one another for the letter... O thou dear mother of Christendom, let these wolves, bears, and lions go, and shelter themselves where they please; regard no longer these evil beasts, take thee John, the disciple of Christ, who teaches love and humility. (Sig. Rer.,xi,61ff)

Further:

The true ground, what God is, and how He is, what the being of all Beings is, remains as blind to them... though they are called Masters of Letters, they have lost the power of the five vowels. (Mysterium Magnum,ix,49)

Historical faith can no longer breed living faith. Believers are no longer welcomed in the world church. Preachers only tickle the consciences -- they do not lead to a living religion. (Gelassen.,ii,51) Indeed, the world is full of books about the new birth, composed by historical research, but there are few enough who have been newly born. (Princ.,v,12) Mere intellectual apprehension cannot save; (Test III,v,12) churches cannot live on meanings, on interpretations. They cannot lead men to the new birth.

This is Boehme's inner rebellion against the dead formalism of his church -- a rebellion based on the certainty and faith which his second 'awakening' had given him.

In my knowledge I do not first collect letters (Buchstaben) from many books; no, I have the letter within me. Do not heaven and earth, even God Himself, exist in man? Shall he not read this letter, which he himself is? Had I no other book except my book, which I myself am, I would have library enough. The whole Bible lies within me! I have the Spirit of Christ, what more do I need? (Apol. Tilk.,II,297,298)

God's gift had been given to him; what more did he need?
 Nothing was lacking, and knowing this he could not keep
 silent:

But seeing I know experimentally in power and light
 that it is a mere gift of God, who also gives me
 a driving will thereunto, that I must write what I
 know and see; therefore, I will obey God rather than
 man; lest my office and stewardship be taken away from
 me again, and given another, which would eternally grieve
 me. (Epist.,iii,8)

Although these God-given gifts were dormant, unused, and
 nearly forgotten, they were not dead:

and gone; albeit they were hid by the devil and the
 world; yet now they oftentimes appear and show themselves
 more deep and wonderful. (Epist.,iii,17)

Nowhere did Boehme write extensively of this second
 awakening which he experienced between the years 1616 and 1619.
 He hints at it several times, but he does not stop to explain
 it or to describe it in the same detail as he does his basic
 experience in 1600. The nearest to such a description is in
 the xth Chapter of Princ.:

I have perused many master-pieces of writing, hoping
 to find the Pearl of the Ground of man; but I could find
 nothing of that which my soul lusteth after. I have
 also found very many contrary opinions. And partly
 I have found some who forbid me to search, but I cannot
 know with what ground or understanding, except it be
 that the blind grudge at the eyes of them that see. With
 all this my soul is become very disquiet within, and hath
 been as full of anguish as a woman in her travail, and
 yet nothing was found in it, till I followed the words
 of Christ, when he said, 'You must be born anew if you
 will see the Kingdom of God! Which at first stopped my
 heart, and I supposed that such a thing could not be done
 in this world, but at my departure out of this world.
 And then my soul was in anguish to the birth, and would
 very willingly have tasted the Pearl; and gave itself
 up in this way more vehemently to the birth, till at last
 it obtained a jewel. According to which I will write,
 for a memorial to myself, and for a light to them that

seek. For Christ said, 'None lighteth a candle and puteth it under a bushel, but setteth it upon a table, that all that are in the house may see the light of it.' And to this end he giveth the pearl to them that seek, that they should impart it to the poor for their health, as he has very earnestly commanded. Indeed, Moses writeth, that God made man out of the dust of the earth. And that is the opinion of very many: And I should also not have known how that was to be understood, and I should not have learned it out of Moses, nor out of the glosses, which are made upon it; and the veil would have continued still before my eyes, yet in great trouble. But when I found the Pearl, then I looked Moses in the face, and found that Moses had written rightly, and that I had not rightly understood it. (Princ., x,1-2)

This is as close as Boehme comes to describing the new-birth experience during which he broke through the veil a second time. Certain things, however, seem clear. Just as he had been perplexed by the ideas of heaven and hell in the Aurora account of the 1600 experience, so now again he is bothered by an apparently incomprehensible idea -- the new birth. Secondly, this was also a gnostic experience, for it brought him new knowledge and understanding.

Boehme says that after the confiscation of the Aurora he had decided not to continue writing, but this he could not bear. The timidity of the soul vanished. Requested by his noble friends to continue writing and manifest his talent, driven by an inner urge to write down, if only for a memorial to himself, his new gnosis which a mystical experience had given him, Jacob Boehme could no longer keep silent. The Spirit drove him on, indeed, was generous to him, for the next five years form one of the most remarkable periods in

of literary production in history. In the course of these years Jacob Boehme produced some twenty tracts and seventy letters -- writings that belong to some of the greatest documents of speculative philosophy.

VI. THE WORKS OF THE ALCHEMICAL PERIOD

After spending seven years, nearly a full Sabbath, in silent obedience to the Görlitz Council's order not to write, Jacob Boehme again took up his pen to expound the peculiar insights which he felt that God has granted to him.

When he resumed his writing he was a changed, although not a wholly different, man. He no longer was the simple, naïve shoemaker whose mind had turned towards the universe's puzzles. He had now been in contact with the major intellectual forces of his age. His mind had been stretched; but he still maintained his individuality, because it was the same self which had experienced the solution to the basic problems that baffled him.

Before 1619 the sources of his speculation, in so far as they lay beyond himself, had been external: Moller, Paracelsus, Weigel, Luther. But when he resumed his writing these influences became peripheral. His mind was a synthesizing one: he learnt only that which suited his purposes.

He wrote rapidly and ~~repetition~~ repetitiously. In each book he retraced the grounds of his speculation. His theme -- like Bach's theme in the B Minor Mass -- was always repeated, growing with each ~~repetition~~ ^{never wholly} repetition, never wholly the same. And there is reason for this:

I have no controversy with the children of God, by reason of the variety and diversity of gifts. I can reconcile them all in myself... I only bring them to the centre, and there I have the proof and touchstone of all things. Now, then, if you will imitate and follow me, then you shall find it so by experience, and afterwards, perhaps, better understand what I have written. (Epist., xii,38)

Here is a significant point: Boehme's purpose in again taking up his pen -- in addition to his desire to record things for a memorial for himself -- was to communicate an experience, not a speculative system. Although his mysticism was gnostic, ending in what he believed was new knowledge, there can be no doubt that he sought to communicate, not the knowledge, but the experience in which he found it.

What good doth knowledge to me, if I live not in and according to the same? The knowing and also the will and real performance of the same must be within me... It is said: You must be born again, else you shall not see the Kingdom of God. You must become like little children if you will see the Kingdom of God. Not only to contend and dispute about knowledge and opinions, but you must become a new man (a new creature which liveth in God in righteousness...) What need I then contend and wrangle about that which I myself am -- which I have essentially in me, and of which no man can deprive me. (Epist., xii,62,63)

Boehme thus refused the temptation to make his experience of religion as being into a new law. After 1619, then, the focus of his experience and of his writing changed. A new basis of knowledge was obtained, no, not only a new basis, merely a new direction:

I have... a fair garden of roses; which I do not beteem unto my brethern to partake of, but I also desire, and wish from my heart, that the holden roses might also blossom in them... when I go into the ventre, then I find the whole ground... for I find the whole understanding both of good and evil, of God's love and anger; both

desires (viz., of the darkness and of the light) these I set into the humanity of Christ, how God is become man; and I consider the forms of the human properties in the humanity of Christ are wholly and universally without particularity tinged with the love of God in Christ... Man is not so altogether corrupt that there should not be any possibility at all left in him... as the sin and wrath of Adam passed upon us all; so likewise passed and pressed the motion of God's love in Christ's humanity, and out of Christ's humanity through the whole humanity of all men... I write not as one blind and dumb, without knowledge; I have myself found it by experience. I have been as deep in your opinion as yourself, yet my Saviour hath opened my eyes that I see.. I wish with all my heart that you might have the insight into my seeing, and that you might see with me out of my seeing. (Epist., xliii, passim.)

The first book which Jacob Boehme write when he again took up his pen bore the title: Beschreibung der Drei Principien göttlichen Wesens.¹ It consisted of twenty-seven chapters² and in Ms contained a hundred sheets. Of it Boehme says:

The same is a key and alphabet for all those who desire to understand my writings. It treats of the creation, also of the eternal birth of the Deity, or repentance, of the justification of man, of his Paradisical life; also the Fall, and then the new birth, and of the Testaments of Christ, and of the total salvation of man. Very profitable to be read, for it is an eye to know the wonders of the mystery of God. (Epist., xii, 67.)

The essential problem of this book is the same as that of the Aurora -- the basic problem of all Christian theodicy:³ the justification of God. How can the existence of the world be reconciled with belief in God? The simple solution to this question presented in the Aurora is abandoned, and Boehme is

1 Cf. Appendix I for the title of the Ms. Boehme began work on this book January 1619 and completed it in October of the same year.

2 The Autograph ms is lost. The printed versions are made from the copy, corrected and edited, by Michael von Ender. Prunius edited this for the 1730, and earlier, editions. The passages in Parentheses are not from Boehme's pen.

3 Koyré, op. cit., p. 179. Cf. Princ., iv, 31-37 for Boehme's own clear statement of this problem.

now convinced of the world's necessity in the scheme of things because since the Incarnation of Jesus Christ was willed from eternity the world became necessary.

The idea of the three realms of angels in the Aurora becomes, under the impact of the three realms of alchemy, the new and thoroughly dialectical idea of the three principles. (Aurora xii, 37ff.) Where Paracelsus, Schwenkfeldt, and Weigel had seen good and evil in all things, Boehme now saw that good and evil produce a third: the tension that finds its form in body.¹ And these three principles Boehme discovers in all reality -- in God, in the world, and in man. This doctrine forms the basis of Boehme's solution to the problem of theodicy.

These three principles should not be equated with the three persons in the Godhead for in so doing the real character of the Trinity is lost. There is, though, general correspondence. Wrath is the main property of the hidden and unknown Father; love is the main property of the Son, the eternal propitiation and appeasement of the hidden Father's¹ wrath; and movement, the property of the Spirit, ~~is~~ begotten of the dialectical tension between wrath and self-giving love. An exact identification of the three principles with the three persons of the trinity would tend to make the Father the source of evil.

Principle for Boehme is 'birth', a mode of divine action, a source of being, life, a mode of revelation. Each of the principles engenders and rules over three worlds: paradise, hell,

1 E. Underhill, Mysticism, London 1930, pp.144-145.

and the sensible world. A Principle is a life tendency, a Drang.

The first principle is an ardent source of life, corresponding to arrogance and pride in man. It is simply the biological will to be. It is, as Boehme well sees, self-consuming unless the self-will produces its own opposition, a meek and yielding love. These two principles -- the self-assertive and self-rielding -- and thus necessary for each other's existence. They are, in short, dialectical. The first principle Boehme characterizes by fire, the second by light:

Thou knowest that God Himself is all, and there are but three principles in His essence, or else all things would be one thing, and all were merely God; and if it were so, then all would be in sweet meekness. But where would be mobility, kingdom, power, and **glory**? Therefore we have often said, the anger is the root of life; and if it be without the light, then it is not God, but hell-fire; but if the light shineth therein, it becomes paradise and fullness of joy. (Princ.,xxv,78.)

The wrath principle is thus demonic,¹ but not evil. Self-will or the will to be is evil unless it is tintured by love and by the will to surrender and yield. God as Father is the source of this will to be, for as Boehme says in the Beginning of Princ. -- and here the German is used as an example of his literary ability:

So wir nun von Gott wollen reden, was Der und wo Der sey? so müssen wir ja sagen, dass Gott selber das Wesen aller Wesen sey: Denn von Ihme ist alles erboren, geschaffen, und herkommen, und nimt alles Ding seinen ersten Anfang

¹ For a Description of 'demonic', Cf. Goethe's Dichtung und Wahrheit, Bk.xx.

aus Gott...Dass aber nun ein Unterschied sey, dass das Böse nicht Gott heisse und sey, das wird in dem ersten Principio verstanden; dass da ist der ernstliche Quell der Grimmigkeit, nach welcher sich Gott nennt. Denn in der Grimmigkeit stehet des Lebens und aller Beweglichkeit Urkund; so aber deselbe (Quell der Grimmigkeit) mit den Lichte Gottes wird angezündet, so ists nicht mehr Grimmigkeit; sondern die ernstliche Grimmigkeit wird in Freude verwandelt. (Princ.,i,1-2) 1

God is thus the source of being, but not of evil. The will to be is potentially good or evil, and evil is present only when the second principle is totally absent, when love no longer tinctures the first principle. When the second principle disappears then there is an eternal stillness -- death! Being is therefore the result of the dialectical interplay of the two first principles, producing the third principle which is life, or Spirit, or personality, or definiable being. The first principle thus begets the second, and the tension between them begets the third.

In Princ., then, Boehme has advanced immeasurably beyond the primitive ideas of the Aurora for here the patterns of his future speculation are fixed and the broad outlines of his final system determined.

1 Seeing we are now to speak of God, what He is, and where He is, we must say, that God Himself is the essence of all essences; for all is generated or born, created and proceeded from Him, and all things take their beginning out of God... But there is yet this difference that evil neither is, nor is called God; this is understood in the first Principle, where it is the earnest fountain of the wrathfulness, according to which, God calleth Himself an angry, wrathful, and zealous God. For the original of life, and of all mobility, consisteth in the wrathfulness; yet if the same (the source of wrathfulness) be kindled with the light of God, it is then no more tartness, but the severe wrathfulness of changed into great joy.

Upon finishing Princ. Boehme began his next work, Vom Dreyfachen Leben des Menschen nach dem Geheimniss der Dreyen Principien Göttlicher Offenbarung. The composition of this book began in November 1619 and lasted until the middle of 1620. In a Letter to Carl von Ender, 29 November 1619, Boehme said that he soon would be able to send Ender something which clearly 'opened' what man is, and what man must be and do to obtain the chief~~test~~ good. (Epist.,v,9) The work was most likely finished before August, 1620. (Epist., xiii). It was sixty sheets in length, and Boehme said that it was

a key for above and below to all mysteries, to whatsoever the mind is able to think upon, or whithersoever the heart is able to turn and move itself. It sheweth the whole ground of the three principles. It serveth every one according to his property. He may sound the depth and resolve all questions, whatsoever reason is able to devise and propound. (Epist.,xii,68)

The central problem in this book is not different from the one that occupied Boehme in the Aurora and in Princ., although it is not stated in quite the same fashion. Its form has changed. No longer does he ask: why is there evil in the world, nor does he ask how does evil come from a good God. The new form is an attempt to justify the creation of the world. If God is good, then how did this world come to be? A good God could be responsible neither for a fall which he has not wished nor for sin which He has not decreed. Thus does Boehme come to the problems of Freedom, Fall, and final restitution.

The focus of Boehme's speculation has here narrowed to creation. In the Aurora he had avoided these questions, and

in Princ. he had dodged them by dealing mainly with the idea of God and of the modes of reality. But when he writes on man he must face them squarely. Why did not God destroy both Lucifer and Adam after they had fallen? Here there is really a conflict between two ideas: the goodness of God and the value of His Creation. And the solution which Boehme endeavoured to work out in Dreyfach is aimed at safeguarding the goodness and freedom of God as well as maintaining the¹ worth of creation and the freedom of man.

Why, then, has God created the world? Because He wished to manifest and reveal Himself. Thus the God who is the will to be becomes also the God who is the will to be manifested,² an ens manifestativum sui. He creates a world to manifest Himself and to be known, thus expressing Himself in nature and in man. God as the eternal nothing, outside of nature and creature, cannot be conscious of Himself, for no being can be conscious of nothing. God needs something of which he can be conscious. This is the Gegenwurf, Wiederrille, the counter-image which is the created world. The world thus becomes the dialectical pre-condition of God's self-knowledge, for to be conscious of self God must first create an image of Himself which then can become the object of His self-contemplation.

This leads to Boehme's dialectic of Freedom and Desire. The theme is that in all things there is good and evil. This is here enlarged and realized so that the two tendencies -- towards

¹ Koyré, Op. cit., pp. 240-241. It is perhaps evident that these ideas come from Lutheranism and nature mysticism.

² Cf. Aurora, xiv, 9-10.

self-projection and towards self-knowledge -- govern all of life. No being is without these two, and thus no being is without the anxiety ~~which~~ is the product of their tension. The Widerwille of creation which Boehme understands as a desirous self-seeking is in continual opposition to the other will. The one is arduous, defiant, self-assertive; the other is calm, silent, and free. Between these two there lies all of life with its anxious flow and movement.

Now each one of these Principles has a mother, or a source, from which it springs. And when change, or transmutation, is to be brought about then a principle must return to its mother and be born again. The source of the selfish desirous Widerwille is the centrum naturae (Dreyfach, iii, 56) vi, 44; viii, 5, 6), but this is not the ultimate source, for this centrum naturae is the counter-image (Gegenwurf) of the inmost centrum. And the new birth is simply the return of the creature to its ultimate centrum and by this return to acquire a nature wholly new, a new birth.

The image of this transmutation is borrowed from alchemy. In the alchemical transmutation fire was the agent of the change. So, fire becomes the purgative agent that leads to the mystical new birth. In a remarkable simile Boehme describes what he means by this form of the unio mystica, and he makes especially clear that in mysticism there is no thought of absorption into God, of nirvana :

I give you an earthly similitude of this (a soul free of itself). Behold a bright flaming piece of iron, which

of itself is dark and black, and the fire so penetrates and shines through the iron, that it gives light. Now, the iron does not cease to be; it is iron still; and the source of the iron retains its own property; it does not take the iron into it, but it penetrates through the iron; and it is iron then as well as before, free in itself; and so also is the source of the fire; in such a manner is the soul set in the Deity; the Deity penetrates through the soul, and dwells in the soul, yet the soul does not comprehend the Deity, but the Deity comprehends the soul, but does not alter it, but only gives it the divine source of the Majesty. (Dreyfach, vi, 68)

He continues the metaphor:

if the flaming iron be cast, or fall into the water, then the property of the fire, the glance and the heat which proceeds from it, are all quenched together.
(Ibid.)

Here, in this figure borrowed from Origen, the relationship of Boehme's ideas of mystical regeneration to the alchemical processes is clear.

Balthasar Walther is responsible for Boehme's next work, Vierzig Fragen von der Seele. In the Introduction which the translator of the 1665 English edition wrote there is the following:

Boehme wrote these questions...chiefly for the benefit of all such as love the knowledge of Mysteries. This friend of his was Dr Balthasar Walther, who, travelling for learning and hidden wisdom, and on his return home, happened to hear of this author in the city of Gorlitz; and when he had obtained acquaintance with him, He rejoiced, that at last he had found at home, in a cottage, that which he had traveled for so far, and not received satisfaction; then he went to the several universities in Germany, and did there collect such questions of the soul as were thought and accounted impossible to be resolved fundamentally and convincingly, which he made this catalogue of, and sent to this author, from whom he received these answers to his desire. 1

1 In Barker's 1911 reprint, p.xxi. (Cf. Bibliography II.

Boehme, it seems, already had the questions in his hands on 18 January 1619. (Epist.,i,17) The Ms was finished 3 August 1620¹ and it contained 28 sheets (Epist.,xii,69) The supplement, usually bearing the title Das Umgewandte Auge, and which forms the Appendix to Question One, was composed later. Boehme naively says of this work that it

treats of all things which are necessary for a man to know. (Epist.,xii,69)

This is not a great and unified speculative achievement like the previous works. Boehme simply sets out to answer the Forty Questions, although traces of his development are certainly evident. In the first place, the conception of the Ungrund, though certainly implicit in his earlier works, here appears in precise form. Also the conception of the Virgin Sophia, the hypostasation of the world of ideas, becomes recognizeable. The Ungrund is Boehme's word for the Absolute devoid of all determination, and, as Schopenhauer suggests, it must have come to Boehme from the heretical atmosphere of the period.² The idea of the Virgin Sophia is found in a primitive form in Princ.

When Boehme had created the conceptions of the 'Unconditioned Abyss' and the 'Virgin Sophia', modes of God beyond 'nature and creature', then his speculation found a new center because his problem now was this: how can this basically unconditioned and indeterminate God exist in a conditioned, determined

1 Buddecke, Verzeichniss der Handschriften, p.xx.

2 Ueber die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichen Grunde, Ch.ii,#8. In Werke, Inselverlag, III, p.31.

world. This is simply the problem of the Incarnation:

If we write of the Incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and speak of it correctly, we must reflect upon the cause, and consider what moved God to become man, seeing that He was not in need of this for the realization of His being. And it can by no means be said that God's own being was changed in the Incarnation. For God is unchangeable, and yet has become what He was not. (Menschw., I,1,15)

This is a change from Dreyfach where Boehme had asserted that God needed to manifest Himself. The Incarnation thus becomes a new focus in His speculation. The problem of evil is no longer central; it has been resolved into the problem of the Christ, of God in the world. Although his conception of evil is far from that of the Hellenistic period, he finds himself forced back to their problem: how can the Infinite God live within the finite world. But Boehme's solution is unique. God is the source both of 'fire' and of 'light'. And in Christ both 'fire' and 'light' are united:

For there have been from eternity only two principles, one in itself, the fiery world, and the other similarly in itself, the light flaming world; although they were not separated, as fire and light are not separated, the light dwelling in the fire, without being laid hold of by it. We are thus to understand two kinds of spirits united in one another, namely, a fiery spirit... and a gentle light-flaming spirit. (Menschw., I,1,7-8)

This naturally brings him to a further clarification of his doctrine of the three Principles. In Princ. he was close to identifying the three alchemical Grundsubstanzen with the three persons of the Trinity. Now this is changed. He writes:

Thus we understand also that the third principle, or the source and spirit of this world, has from eternity been hidden in the Eternal Nature of the Father's property, and was seen by the light-flaming spirit in the Holy Magia, in God's wisdom and the divine tincture. Consequently the Deity had moved itself according to the nature of the genetrix, and brought forth the great mystery, wherein lay all that the eternal nature can do. It was however, only a mysterium, and resembled no creature, but there was in it everything as in a chaos together. The fierce wrathful nature has generated a dark chaos, and the light-flaming in its proprium has generated flames in the Majesty and in the gentleness, which from eternity has been the water-fountain and cause of the holy divine essentiality. It was power and spirit only, without parallel, now was anything discerned there but the spirit of God in a twofold source and form, viz. the hot and cold severe source of fire, and the gentle source of love, and after the manner of fire and light. This has like a mystery entered one into the other, and yet one has not comprehended the other, but has at the same time remained in two principles... All this in the mystery has indeed thus alswys had an eternal beginning, as it cannot be said that something has arisen which has not had its figure as a shadow in the great spiritual Magia; but there was no being, but only a spiritual play one in the other, and it is the Magia of the great wonders of God, where always there has been origination, where there has been nothing but an ungrounded existence. This nothing has in the nature of the fire and light advanced into a ground, and yet issues from nothing but the spirit of the source, which is not a being either, but a source which gives birth to itself in itself in two properties, and likewise separates into two principles. It has no separator or maker, nor any cause of its own creativeness, but is itself the cause... For the third principle stood before God as a Magia, and was not made whole manifest. Hence God has not had any likeness, in which he might have beheld his own being, but the wisdom only... All has been created from the great mystery, and this virgin of the Wisdom of God stood in the mystery, and in it has the spirit of God seen the forms of the creatures. For it is that which is uttered, what the Father utters by the Holy Spirit out of His centre... and thus we are to understand the Being of the Deity and also of the eternal nature. And we understand always the divine being in the Light of majesty, for the gentle light makes the Father's severe nature gentle, lovely, and merciful, by which God is called a Father of mercy in accordance with His heart or Son. For the Father's proprium stands in

fire and light. He is Himself the Being of all beings. He is the unground and the ground, and in the eternal birth divides into three properties, or into three persons, or into three principles, although in eternity there are but two in being, and the third is a mirror of the first two, from which this world has been created as a palpable existence in a beginning and an end. (Menschw., I,xi,11ff.)

Boehme's speculative direction again has shifted. For in the earlier works the third principle is almost identified with the third Person in the Trinity. Now he identifies it with the Virgin Wisdom. Later, when his speculation is fully realized, there will be two 'spirits' in his theogony where he now has but one.

Menschw. is the most lucid of Boehme's works of the alchemical period. Yet near the end of this tract the note of the next period begins to appear. The third part, bearing the title: The Tree of Christian Faith contains some of Boehme's best writing. Knowledge, however, is still the key to salvation. Indeed, the whole of the alchemical period is dominated by the idea that the knowledge of the process of transmutation offers the key to the regeneration of the human soul.

Following the completion of Menschw. Boehme wrote two works which usually are grouped together: Von sechs Punkten, and Eine Kurze Erklärung, sometimes also known as Sechs Mystische Punkte. They were written in 1620, and they mark a step forward in Boehme's grasp of his rapidly developing speculative system. Of these works he says

The sixth book, or part of these writings, are the six points, treating of the greatest depths and secrets; viz. how the Three Principles do mutually beget, bring

forth, and bear each other, so that in the eternity there is no strife... and yet each principle is in itself as it is in its own property, as if it were only one, and alone; and they show whence strife and disunity arise, and whence good and evil have their original, wholly indited out of the ground (that is, out of the nothing into the something), and all in the ground of nature; this sixth book is such a mystery (however in plainness and simplicity it is brought to light) that no reason (or natural, astral head-piece, though never so acute, and literally learned) can sound, fathom, or understand the same without the light of God; it is the key to all. (Epist., xii, 71)

Theos Punkt. is a speculative work, marking an advance over the previous writings in clarity and lucidity but not in speculative realization. True knowledge is still his goal, even though now this knowledge is self-knowledge. Boehme is beginning to see, though, that knowledge alone will not suffice:

It is not merely a question of taking comfort (in knowing) but of keeping down the imposter lest he become master in the house. (Theos. Punkt., vi, 22)

Boehme's mystical way from knowledge of nature to knowledge of the self is beginning to break down and he is now beginning to see that self-knowledge leads to repentance. In Theos. Punkt. he is beginning to doubt that knowledge can save:

There must be doing: viz, a striving against the devil's will, contenting oneself with little, in patience shutting oneself up in hope in God, resisting the four elements and taking in God's four elements, which are love, meekness, mercy, and patience in hope... Man must here be at war with himself, if he wishes to become a heavenly citizen. He must not be a lazy sleeper, and with a gourmandizing and swelling fill his belly, whereby the devil's elements begin to qualify. For God's wrath fights continually against him; he will have enough to do to defend himself. For the devil is his enemy, God's wrath is his enemy within him, and the whole world is his enemy... Therefore fighting must be the watchword, but not with tongue and sword, but with mind and spirit;

and not give over... And though it should seem to him that he were alone in this path, and the whole world should say: Thou art a fool, and art mad; yet he should be as if were dead in the world, and heard that from the mouth of the devil... He should nowhere give ground; but think that in his purpose, he would thus deliver him from the devil, and bring him into His Kingdom. (Theos. Punkt., vi, 22f.)

This is mystical faith -- the indwelling of God's purpose in the soul of man, a union of two wills. But Boehme holds it as a goal to be achieved, not as an experienced reality.

Myst. Punkt. is a short and clear discussion of six questions. Its purpose and place in Boehme's speculation is clear from the short Preface:

The precious knowledge is not found unless the soul has once conquered in the assault and struck down the devil, so that it obtains the knight's garland, which the gracious virgin of chastity puts upon it as a token of victory that it has overcome in its dear champion Christ. Then the wonderful knowledge rises, but with no perfection.

The six points discussed in this work are: On the blood and water of the soul; on the election of grace, on good and evil; on sin; how Christ will deliver up the Kingdom of His Father; on magic; on mystery.

The title-page of Ird u. himml. Myst. gives the date of its composition: 8 May 1620. It is a short work of nine texts in which Boehme's system is succinctly described.

But the greatest work of the alchemical period, and by many writers considered the greatest of all Boehme's works, ~~is~~ the Signatura Rerum. On February 1622 he concluded the first main period of his work by this book which bears the secondary title: Von der Geburt und Bezeichnung aller Wesen.

Boehme says of this work that it is

a very deep book (concerning the signature of all things), and of the signification of the several forms and shapes of the creation; and it shows what the beginning, ruin, and cure of everything is; this enters wholly into the internal, and then into the temporal, inchoative, and external nature and form. (Epist., xii,73)

Sparrow, the English translator, says in his Preface:

Herein the author sets forth fundamentally the birth, sympathy, and antipathy of all beings; how all beings originally arise out of one eternal mystery, and how that same mystery begets itself from eternity to eternity; and likewise how all things, which take their original out of this eternal mystery, may be changed into evil, and again out of evil into good... But let the reader know that the sharp speculation of his own reason will never pry into the depth of this book, but rather bring him into a ~~maze~~ of doubtful notions. 1

Sig. Rer. is an alchemical book of great power and depth and its central point is the identification of the alchemical process of transmutation with the process of salvation. The alchemical tincture, which is the substantial product of the processing that is projected upon the lead to change it into gold, is identified with Christ. This is a book of intricate symbolism, which, in spite of its intricacy, seems to be fully accurate and precise.² and there is no doubt that behind its weary maze of metaphor and chemocal-astrologiaal figures there lie genuine religious and even mystical impulses:

When Mars, Mercury, and Luna see also this, then they cry Crucifige, away with him, he is a false King in our garment; he is a man as we are, and will be god, that is, they cast their poisonous desire through the purple garment.

1 Everyman's Edition.

2 Cf. Underhill, Mysticism, pp.144,146.

upon the child, and so the artist will see that the child will appear in his own form, as if it were full of streaks from the poisonous rays of Mercury and Mars, which they lay upon the child through the impression of Saturn, as Pilate whipped Jesus: the artist will see the prickly crown of thorns standing very sharp with its point upon the property of the child; also he will see that Venus does not at all move herself, but stands still and suffers herself to be done into. (Sig. Rer., xl, 23)

There are also strange mystical passages in Sig. Rer., couched in this intricate symbolism. Boehme thus describes mystical union:

And this is the cure of my soul's sickness; he that will adventure it with me shall find by experience what God will make of him: As for example; I here write, and I also ~~do~~ not do it; for, as I know nothing, and have also not learned nor study it; so then I do it not, but God does it in me as He pleases. I am not known to myself, but I know to him what and how he pleases. I am not known to myself, but I know to him; and thus we are in Christ only one, as a tree in many boughs and branches, and he begets and brings forth the fruit in every branch as he pleases, and thus I have brought his life into mine, so that I am atoned with him in his love; for his will in Christ is entered into the humanity in me, and now my will in me enters into his humanity; and ~~thus~~ ~~his~~ living Mercury, that is, his word, viz. the speaking Mercury, tinctures my wrathful evil Mercury, and transforms it into his. And thus my Mars is become a love-fire of God, and his Mercury speaks through mine, as through his instrument, what he pleases; and thus my Jupiter lives in the divine joy, and I know it not; the true sun shines to me, and I see it not; for I live not to myself, I see not to myself, and I know not to myself: I am a thing, and I know not what; for God knows what I am; and so now I tend to and run to and fro as a thing, in which the spirit drives or actuates me as he pleases; and thus I live according to my inward will, which yet is not mine. But I find in me another life, which I am, not according to the resignation (or self-denial), but according to the creature of this world, viz. according to the similitude of eternity; this life does not stand in poison and strife, and shall yet be turned to nothing, and then I am wholly perfect: Now in this same life, wherein yet I find my selfhood, is sin and death, and these likewise shall be brought to nothing: In that life, which God is

in me, I hate sin and death; and according to that life which yet is my selfhood, I hate the nothing, viz. the Deity. Thus one life fights against the other, and there is a continual contest in me; but seeing Christ is born again in me, and lives in my nothingness, therefore Christ will, according to his promise made in paradise, bruise the head of the serpent, viz. of my selfhood, and mortify the evil man in myself, so that he himself may truly live (in me). But what shall Christ do with the evil man? Shall he cast him away? No, for he is in heaven, and does therefore accomplish and effect his wonders in this world, which is evil and good in the wonders of God, viz. in the mirror of glory, which shall yet be revealed in him, and the inward man is not its own, but God's instrument, with whom God makes what he pleases, till the outward with its wonders in the mirror shall also be manifest in God; and even then God is all in all, and he alone in his wisdom and deeds of wonder and nothing else besides; and this is the beginning and the end, eternity and time. (Sig. Rer. ix, 63-65) 66-66

But here the mystical union is still directed pretty well towards the substantial, towards the idea of transmutation of elements which the Boehme of this period considered the pattern of the new birth. Some of the passages in Signatura Rerum are gems of mystical language:

God must become man, man must become God; heaven must become one thing with the earth, and earth must be turned to heaven. If you will make heaven out of the earth, then give the earth heaven's food, that the earth may obtain the will of heaven, that the will of the wrathful Mercury may give itself unto the will of the heavenly Mercury. (Sig. Rer., x, 53) in/

The substantial bias of this view of the unio Mystica is clear from the following:

Christ said, 'He that eateth not the flesh of the Son of man hath no part in him', and he says further, 'he that shall drink of the water that I shall give, it shall spring up in him to a fountain of eternal life'. Here lies the pearl of the new birth: It is not enough to play the sophister; the grain of wheat brings forth no fruit, unless it falls into the earth;

all whatever will bring forth fruit must enter into its mother from whence it first came to be... Thou must eat of God's bread if thou wilt transmute thy body out of the earthly property into the heavenly. (Sig.Rer.,x,54,55.)

This is, of course, playing with figures of speech. Boehme has not asked himself the fruitful question: what is this Pearl of the new birth? What is this bread of life? In the tenth Chapter of Signatura Rerum the question begins to arise, and the answer to this question will give the pattern to Boehme's next period. In the fifteenth Chapter of this book the ancient problems of repentance and resignation -- the traditional marks of German mysticism -- begin to appear. Up until this point in his speculative development Boehme had not stopped to examine the subjective nature of this process of tincturing. When he makes the discovery that Christ's passion must be repeated in each believer's heart, then this strict and formal relationship with the alchemical process stops. He makes this discovery in the fifteenth chapter of Signatura Rerum:

All whatsoever teaches of Christ's satisfaction, and comforting oneself with Christ's suffering, if it teaches not also the true ground how a man must wholly die to selfhood in the death, and give himself up in the resigned will wholly into the obedience of God, as a new child of a new will, the same is without, and not in the speaking voice of God. (Sig.Rer.,xv,25)

This is of course the spiritual note of the Theologia Germanica and of Tauler, and when Boehme followed this traditional form of religious longing he then finds his place

in the long line of German mystics.

The Boehme of the alchemical period was fully certain that knowledge was the key to salvation. The lapis philosophorum (or as he sometimes says, the Universal or the Tinctur or the Arcanum) was the object of knowledge, and the Doctor, to be a real healer and help, must study this process, the way that God Himself restored the 'universal' in man (Sig. Rer., x, 9) This is the 'process of Christ'.

But I will hereby give the well-wisher fundamentally to understand how it went with Christ, and how in like manner it goes with his philosophic work; both have wholly one process. Christ overcame the wrath of death in the human property, and changed the anger of the Father into love in the human property; the philosopher likewise had even such a will, he wills to turn the wrathful earth to heaven and change the poisonous mercury into love. (Sig. Rer., xi, 6)

But the more Boehme contemplated this 'process' of Christ the more ~~ge~~ grew dissatisfied with knowledge as the mystical way. Knowing was not being saved. There must also be an earnest striving:

A true Christian is a continual champion, and walks wholly in the will and desire in Christ's person... he desires to die to the iniquity of death and wrath, and give himself up to obedience, and to arise and live in Christ's obedience in God. Therefore... take heed of putting on Christ's purple mantle without a resigned will; the poor sinner without sorrow for his sins, and conversion of his will does only take it in scorn to Christ; keep you from that doctrine which teaches of self abilities and the works of justification. (Sig. Rer., xv, 25f.) 29

Knowledge, by creating a new imagination which understands 'all mysteries' and is not puffed up, leads to a newly born will. By paralleling the suffering and death of Christ a man can become born to a new spiritual life -- a new will, but really not only a new will, but merely the unburdening of

the old will.

This emphasis upon repentance, regeneration, and the new birth is the final focus of Boehme's speculation. The years of literary production beginning in 1619 and ending towards the end of 1621 served to change the direction of Boehme's search. His full speculative achievements were not attained until after the Busskampf, or after the struggle of penitence, which forms the next period.

VIII. THE MYSTICAL PERIOD: 1622

Jacob Boehme's mysticism was motivated by both the nature philosophy of the Renaissance and by the traditional piety, the Innerlichkeit, of the older German devotion. In the Aurora Boehme's contacts with the older mystical traditions are not so evident, but sometime between 1612 and 1619, in addition to being confronted with Paracelsus and the alchemists, Jacob Boehme was brought face to face with Valentin Weigel, Caspar Schwenkfeldt, and¹ probably with Tauler and Sebastian Franck. Yet behind these mystical writers, indeed supporting them, there was the rugged genius of Martin Luther.

Boehme was born, bred, and buried within the bosom of the Lutheran church, and from one point of view this is the conditioning fact of his life.² He may have strained its strict scholasticism, he may even have departed from it in a few details; but in his speculative adventuring, in his alchemical search for the philosopher's stone, he did not stray far from the Kleiner Catechismus. He may have rebelled against

1 He mentions the following books: Der Wasserstein der Weisen, (Epist.,xxviii,14); the third part of the pseudo-Weigel Gnothi Seauton (Epist.,ix,14); the Fourth Book of Esra (Letzte Zeit I,27). He mentions the following names: Luther, Calvin, Schwenkfeldt (Aurora xx,51ff); Hans Weyrauch, Schwenkfeldt, Weigel (Epist.,xii,51ff); Paracelsus (Letzte Zeit, I,68,69).

2 Erich Seeberg returned from Boehme to Luther with a renewed interest in the reformer's idea of God. 'Mein Weg zu Luther setzte bei Jakob Böhme ein; ich spürte unmystischen Züge in seinem Denken und fand den Grund dafür in seinem Beeinflusstsein durch Luther.' Luthers Theologie, Motive und Grundformen, I. Gottesschauung, Göttingen 1929, p.5.

this rebellion itself was honestly Lutheran, an impulse which the Reformer also shared.

The Reformation gave Boehme the insight that God comes to man ~~on~~ a dual rôle -- in love and wrath. Not only are the broad architectonics of Boehme's theology strongly Lutheran, but even in some details the Görlitz shoemaker followed the genius of the Wittenberg Reformer. The cadences of the Lutheran Bible boom out of Boehme's writings. Listen to the broad rhythm of the Lutheran version of Psalms:

Freuet euch ihr Himmel mit uns, und die Erde jauchtze,
denn des Herrn Lob gehet über alle Berge und Hügel: Er
thut uns auf die Thüre zur Mutter, dass wir eingehen;
lasset uns freuen und fröhlich sein, denn wir waren
blind gebohren, und sind nun sehend worden. Thut auf die
Thoren des Herrn ihr Knachte Gottes, dass die Jungfrauen
mit ohrem Spiel einhergehen; denn es ist ein Reihē, da
wir uns sollen mit den Jungfrauen freuen und fröhlich
seyn, saget der Geist des Herrn Herrn. (Dreyfach, xi, 10)

This is certainly the language of a man steeped in the Lutheran Bible, of a spirit that loved the sweep of Luther's strong, direct, and fully rhythmned German. It is also the language of a man who had felt through to Luther's inner meaning -- who had pondered and wrighed and loved the richness of its values.

But Lutheran phrases also accur. The tracts that comprise the Way to Christ echo in phrasing the Kleiner Catechismus, and it is not imagination to see in the often repeated refrain of the Catechismus -- wir sollen Gott lieben und fürchten -- the impetus to Boehme's dialectical speculation. In Busse and Gebet Boehme repeats the familiar Lutheran prayer formula: Ich armer, unwürdiger, sündiger Mensch. (Cf. also Taufe, I, 4; iv, 15). In Busse he speaks of baptism in the

Lutheran term of Bund -- a word foreign to his conception of the sacrament. (Busse,11) In Apol. Richt. and Aurora he shows his familiarity with Lutheran hymns. (Apol.Richt.,, 57; Aurora,xiv,133). Indeed, the Lutheran hymnal was at that time the real prayer-book of the people, their guide to religious living, a thesaurus of their faith. Its rich collection of hymns in the vernacular, with their firm declarations of confidence, gratitude, and joy, gave the believer a life-treasure, comforting to the soul. The German churches of the Reformation -- Lutheran and Reformed, Anabaptist and Schwenkfeldian -- were churches whose books of common devotion were their hymnals. Jacob Boehme knew his hymnal and quoted from it and from it he received a deep religious impulse and a living faith.

Luther's hymns, embedded in the hymnal which Boehme used and probably owned, express his views on the atonement. This has a significant bearing upon Boehme's mystical conversion. Both Luther and Boehme did not accept the Latin or the Aberlardian view of the work of Christ, but they insisted that Christ had fought with and conquered the principle of death within life:

Christus ist entstanden von der Marter alle:

Dess sollen wir alle froh seyn,

Christ will unser Trost seyn. Kyrie Eleison.

Wär er nicht erstanden, so wär die Welt Vergangen,
Seit dass Er erstanden ist,

So loben wir den Herrn Jesum Christ. Kyrie Eleison.

This hymn expresses the Lutheran view of Christ's work on the cross, and included as it was in the Lutheran hymnal of Boehme's period, it became part of the phraseology of faith.

Boehme left his estimate of Luther's importance in the extraordinary Preface to the Aurora. After describing how the great merchant, the Pope, had sold the divine knowledge in shameless greed, he comes to Luther and the Reformation. The Pope had said:

I have power in heaven and on earth. Come unto me, and but for money the fruit of life. Whereupon all nations flocked to him, and did buy and eat, even until they fainted. All the kings of the south, the west, and towards the north, did eat of the fruits, and lived under a great impotence... and there was a miserable time on earth... But in the evening God in His mercy took pity on man's misery and blindness... (Loc. cit.)

The people flocked to eat of the fruit of the tree of life.

The true religion was revealed in a new twig growing out of the root of the great tree. (~~K~~ust what this sectarian movement was is not clear.) Men flocked to this, and were

mightily rejoiced, and did eat of the Tree of life with great joy and refreshing, and so got new strength from the tree of life, and sang a new song concerning the true real tree of life...

But the merchant (Pope) again seduced man. Again he tempted him with false wares; 'he hawked about the fruit of life'.

But then the great Prince Michael (Luther), who stands before God, came and fought for the holy people, and overcame... But the Prince of darkness, perceiving that his merchant had a fall, and that his deceit was discovered, raised a tempest from the north... and the merchant of the south made assault upon him...

But the glory of the Reformation soon faded:

Now, when the noble and holy tree was revealed to all nations, so that they saw how it moved over them and spread its fragrantcy over all people, and that ~~any~~ one that pleased might eat of it, then the people grew weary of eating of its fruit... They forgot to eat of the fruit of the sweet tree, by reason of the controversy about the root of the tree.

Boehme felt that he lived in the middle of controversies about the 'root of the tree', the search for definitive creeds which circumscribed the nature of the tree's life and which forgot the life and fruit of the tree.

Luther's place in Boehme's thought is clear. He was the 'great Prince Michael' who had fought against the merchant from the south, revealed the evil, and sought to bring the fruit of the Christian tree to all people. But, having seen the true tree of faith, the people became blinded and probed after the roots; and the controversies which followed the Reformation removed faith from the people again.

But in addition to these perhaps superficial and otherwise peripheral ideas, Luther had a basic influence upon the speculative tendencies of Boehme's thought, and from the theological point of view, dominated his last period. Lutheran conceptions are certainly important in Boehme's last period. It is almost as if Boehme returned from his theosophy and alchemical interests in the relationship of God to nature to the basic Lutheran ideas: the opposition of love and wrath, law and Gospel, the idea of justification, and man as the Lord of all things, etc. The idea of the omnipotence of God, the dualism of all reality

1 Bornkamm, Luther und Böhme, p.103.

and the sharp emphasis upon will derive from the Saxon reformer's work.

But Jacob Boehme brought new phases into the mystical speculation of Germany. This newer mysticism speculated in the fields which had been least cultivated by the Reformers: the doctrine of God, of the Trinity, of Creation, of the relation of man to God, and of knowledge and revelation.¹ Classical mysticism had been God-centered, aiming sometimes at self-annihilation in God (nirvana); medieval mysticism became more subjective, seeking total forgetfulness of sin and the glorification of individuality, though not here in this life. The Reformation, proclaiming pardon here and now, paved the way for Protestant mysticism which placed nature within the Divine Order, and thus raised the problem of the relationship of nature to the soul.² Investigation along this line is theosophy.

Jacob Boehme's native tendency to investigate the relationship of his own soul to the natural world was reinforced by his contact, direct or indirect, with Valentin Weigel, Caspar Schwenkfeldt, and the older German mystics.

Although Boehme mentions Schwenkfeldt but twice in his writings, passages in which he professes disagreement with his ideas, there can be little doubt that he was a kindred spirit to the Ossig nobleman who had lived a hundred years before

1 J.A. Dorner, History of Protestant Theology, (tr. Robson and Taylor) Edinburgh 1871, p.178.

2 Ibid., II, p.179.

him. Like Boehme, Schwenkfeldt had outgrown Lutheranism; indeed, a note on the cover of the Schwenkfeldt Ms in Berlin tersely describes Schwenkfeldt's spiritual life:

C.S. was born Ao 1490; came to Lutheranism in 1519; came to the true knowledge of Jesus Christ in 1527. 1

In the Wolffenbüttel Catalogue of Boehme's writings there is a similar statement:

J.B. was born Ao 1575; re-born Ao 1600; and newly enlightened 1610. 2

Both Boehme and Schwenkfeldt were thus grasped by God in gracious visitation; the nobleman having received the βαπτιστήν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον καὶ πυρί; the shoemaker had seen more in one quarter of an hour than all the universities could teach. But the experiences were not comparable: Schwenkfeldt's influence was theological -- the new birth had changed his way of life.³ Boehme's impulse was a new vision of heaven and of earth; it led him to philosophize and to adventurous theological speculation. In spite of these differences Peuckert has found a long list of parallel passages, indeed, of verbal quotations.⁴ These citations prove no certain knowledge by Boehme of Schwenkfeldt's writings, but they are evidence. Boehme did borrow the title of one of Schwenkfeldt's tracts: Schwenkfeldt had written Von dem dreifachen Leben des Menschen; Boehme wrote Von dem Dreyfachen Leben des Menschen. But the nobleman was

1 Quoted by Peuckert, Leben, p,69.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., pp.171-173.

a practical minded theologian, interested in the needs of his growing congregations; the shoemaker was the poet of inner contemplation and speculation.

When and how did Boehme come to know Schwenkfeldt?

In the Aurora there is no trace of dependence, though it must be understood that the Aurora was unfinished and that Schwenkfeldt's influence would most likely have appeared in the latter part, the unwritten soteriological sections. The Schwenkfeldian 'new birth' is nowhere mentioned. But in Dreyfach the situation is different for the theme of the book is the new birth (i,1ff), though not in the exact Schwenkfeldian sense for Boehme calls it the ewige Geburt.¹ In the Aurora Boehme was more of a pantheist than a mystic; in Dreyfach he has changed; and in the works that followed, especially in the small works gathered together under the title Der Weg zu Christo, there is a growing tendency to emphasize this ewige Geburt until finally in Test. Boehme writes what is a fully Schwenkfeldian book.

Just who it was who brought Boehme to Schwenkfeldt is not known, but an intelligent guess is that it was the Schwenkfeldian nobleman, Carl von Ender. Erasmus Francisci in his Gegenstrahl der Morgenröthe says

Es will verlauten, mit dem Böhmen sei ein schlesischer Student, so ein Schwenkfelder gewest, sehr viel umgangen; Von dиеdem Studenten habe er auch des wenige erfahren, was er an lateinischen Broben in seinen Büchern gebrauchte.²

¹ Cf. particularly last part of Ch.xiv. Cf.also Dreyfach iii,49; Menschw., I,xi,8; and xii,17; Princ., iv,9 and xxii,23; Epist.,xxviii,6; Gnad.,xiii,97ff; Myst. Mag.,v,19; and Anti-stief.,66.

² Quoted by Peuckert, Leben, p.73.

Ender was doubtless this Schwenkfeldian student, and he brought Boehme others, some of them members of the Schwenkfeldian congregations, who became members of the circle about the shoemaker. A group of disciples thus gathered about the shoemaker, and by 1621 it had become the conditioning factor of his life. Another of the Schwenkfeldian members of this Boehme group was the nobleman, Abraham von Franckenberg, of whom little is known. Hans Sigmund von Schweinichen was brought to Boehme by the shocking experience of having killed a man in a duel.¹ Along with Schweinich there came his nephew, David von Schweinitz.² Also Hans Dietrich von Tschesch,³ Abraham von Franckenberg,³ and Michael von Ender were found in the Boehme group. All these men were loosely known as Schwenkfeldians but the name must have been indifferently applied, for ever since Valentin Krautwald, the friend of Schwenkfeldt, the Schwenkfeldian church embraced more than the strict followers of the Reformer.⁴ Even the official history of the denomination, Erläuterung für Caspar Schwenkfeldt,⁵ suggests that many of the 'awakened' were to be found in the congregations even though they were not followers of

1 Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, p.259.

2 Tschesch, under the pen-name of Heinrich Prunius, wrote an important work: Einleitung in dem edlen Lilien-Zweig des Grundes und Erkenntniss der Schrifften des Hoherleuchteten Jacob Böhme, Amsterdam, 1639. Prunius was also one of the early textual editors.

3 Franckenberg wrote the famous De Vita et Scriptis.

4 Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, pp.244,245.

5 Sumnytaun, Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania the Enders (now spelled Anders), the Schweinitz's and the Johns are still Schwenkfeldian physicians. A descendent of the Johns is now one of the Chief Justices on the Supreme Court of the U.S.A., Chief Justice Roberts, of Pennsylvania.

Schwenkfeldt. After Boehme's death this Boehmist circle continued to exist within the Schwenkfeldian church, even though the leaders had fled to Amsterdam,¹ and when the congregation migrated to Pennsylvania they were split into two groups, one of which was known as the 'Boehmist party'.² There is thus certainty, not only that Boehme's spirit was influenced by Schwenkfeldt and the Schwenkfeldian church, but also that his own speculations had an influence upon the congregations as well.³

There is, however, another way by which Boehme may have come to Caspar Schwenkfeldt -- through the writings of Valentin Weigel. Boehme admits that Weigel wrote just as well as did Schwenkfeldt about the new birth,⁴ and it is certainly true that the idea of the ewige Geburt was not characteristic of Schwenkfeldt alone, but that it was the common heritage of German mysticism.

Valentin Weigel, the meek minister of Zschoppau, was through his writings the continuator of the traditional German mystical impulse as well as the man who united the nature mysticism of Paracelsus with the older German traditions. After his death in 1588 his works were widely circulated in mss,⁵ and after 1609 they found their way into print. The Lutheran inquisition

1 Cf. Gichtel, Theosophica Practica, Amsterdam 1722, containing the Letters of Gichtel to Martin John.

2 H.W.Kriebel, The Schwenkfeldians in Pennsylvania, Lancaster (Pennsylvania) 1904, p.57.

3 Schwenkfeldian physicians were attached to the nobleman because of his ideas of healing. Cf. Schwenkfeldt, Von der Himmlischen Arzeney, Allentown, Pennsylvania, 1820.

4 Epist., xii, 59ff.

5 Peuckert, Leben, p.78.

forbade the printing of these works at Halle, but they continued to appear and the followers of Weigel were lumped together with the Rosenkreutzer and Schwenkfeldians and classed as heretics.

Like Boehme, Weigel saw that in all things there was good and evil, and he asserted that this dialectical conflict could be overcome by some form of the new birth. This is good German mysticism. But Weigel added to this, as the Dialogus de Christianismo shows,¹ certain elements that were decidedly not medieval in tone. Yet the strict spirituality of Tauler and the Theologia Germanica was fed to Boehme by Weigel, for Prunius, in his Einleitung von dem Edlen Lilien Zweig, says that Boehme's conceptions of the supersensual life² and the ideas in that tract came directly from Tauler. Indeed, there can be little doubt that the atmosphere and spirit of German mysticism went from Tauler to Boehme through Weigel. Expressions like Ichheit and conceptions like Gelassenheit³ are typical.

Furthermore, Weigel's Christology was certainly Schwenkfeldian,⁴ for he maintained Christ's double identity; this was the result of the dialectical structure of his thought. Weigel was primarily concerned with the inner man, with the Christ of

1 Cf. Peuckert, Pansophia, passim.

2 Cf. R.M.Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries, and Prunius, op.cit., p.44.

3 This is the tradition of mystical silence. Cf. Angelus Silesius, Cherubinischer Wandersmann, I,240. Resignation in the older mystical tradition was the surrender of the I, the sinking of the soul into God, surrender of self-will, for He who does away with the 'I', in him God dwells. Tauler said: 'So viel der Mensch ausgeht, ebensoviel geht Gott ein.' Predigten, I,43.

4 Jones, op. cit., p.142.

forbade the printing of these works at Halle, but they continued to appear and the followers of Weigel were lumped together with the Rosenkreutzer and Schwenkfeldians and classed as heretics.

Like Boehme, Weigel saw that in all things there was good and evil, and he asserted that this dialectical conflict could be overcome by some form of the new birth. This is good German mysticism. But Weigel added to this, as the Dialogus de Christianismo shows,¹ certain elements that were decidedly not medieval in tone. Yet the strict spirituality of Tauler and the Theologia Germanica was fed to Boehme by Weigel, for Prunius, in his Einleitung von dem Edlen Lilien Zweig, says that Boehme's conceptions of the supersensual life and the ideas in that tract came directly from Tauler.² Indeed, there can be little doubt that the atmosphere and spirit of German mysticism went from Tauler to Boehme through Weigel. Expressions like Ichheit and conceptions like Gelassenheit³ are typical.

Furthermore, Weigel's Christology was certainly Schwenkfeldian,⁴ for he maintained Christ's double identity; this was the result of the dialectical structure of his thought. Weigel was primarily concerned with the inner man, with the Christ of

1 Cf. Peuckert, Pansophia, passim.

2 Cf. R.M. Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries, and Prunius, op.cit., p.44.

3 This is the tradition of mystical silence. Cf. Angelus Silesius, Cherubinischer Wandersmann, I,240. Resignation in the older mystical tradition was the surrender of the I, the sinking of the soul into God, surrender of self-will, for He who does away with the 'I', in him God dwells. Tauler said: 'So viel der Mensch ausgeht, ebensoviel geht Gott ein.' Predigten, I,43.

4 Jones, op. cit., p.142.

the heart, and external, objective, and historical were for him relatively unimportant. This is, of course, mystical, if mysticism is concerned with being and not with doing. Salvation in this mystical view emphasizes the new being in Christ, the new birth, and not merely an ethical cleansing, forgiveness, justification, and reconciliation. If religion is being, then the basic postulate must be that at the center of the soul there is Christ; if, on the other hand, religion is doing, then the basic postulate must be that at the center of the soul there is law, or moral imperative. Both postulates imply a further one -- freedom. Weigel and Schwenkfeldt, building upon German mysticism, emphasized the new being in Christ. Weigel united to this emphasis the new nature mysticism of the Renaissance, thus raising the problem of the relation of Christ to nature. In theology this is the teaching about the Lord's Supper.

Schwenkfeldt's unique doctrine was the teaching of ubiquity of which he saw two kinds: there is first a natural ubiquity, deriving from substantial reality, presentia potentia, which was decidedly pantheistic in tendency; and secondly, a ubiquity resulting from faith, from the participation of all believers in the eternal Word.¹ This doctrine, though basically Lutheran, was really a deeper realization of Luther's two modes of God, the deus absconditus and the deus revelatus, for it became the Anknüpfungspunkt for Paracelsian nature mysticism. Thus

1 Bornkamm, Luther und Böhme, p.169.

the Schwenkfeldian doctrine of ubiunity was the place in which Boehme could find room for his entire cosmological speculation, and it is significant that the writings of both Schwenkfeldt and Weigel confirmed this speculative tendency in Boehme's own mind. Neoplatonic speculation, moving in the field of God's relationship to his creatures, was dependent upon the Schwenkfeldian Abendmahlslehre for its logical integration. There were many other dependent problems implied in this doctrine, as evil, nature. etc. But its importance for the last great period of Boehme's speculative work cannot be overestimated.

The writings of Caspar Schwenkfeldt and Valentin Weigel thus confirmed Boehme's own insight that the processes of nature and history were the symbols of spiritual processes. This emphasis gave Boehme the clue to his Innerlichkeit, an inward apprehension of Christ which was the essential 'Christ-pantheism' of Osiander. This indwelling of God, a justitia essentialis, implied substantial regeneration accomplished by means of appropriating Christ's body in mystical union. It was directly opposed to the limited and formal justitia forensis of the Reformers; it was regeneration instead of justification, the new birth rather than reconciliation. This is itself Protestant mysticism in Schwenkfeldt and Weigel; but in Boehme it reaches its noblest expression.

Sometime in the year 1622 Jacob Boehme discovered that the new birth which he was seeking with all the ardour that his being could muster was an internal event. This is his mystical

conversion. In Busse he wrote

I will describe a Way which I myself have gone, and which they, if so inclined, can also walk in, as I did and have hereinafter described. * (i,12)

And what is this way which he describes? What is the nature of this new mystical methodology? In the eight tracts which the sure instinct of the Boehme editors included in the work, The Way to Christ, this new spirit of devotion, this mystical way, is clear. These eight tracts represent a new aspect of Boehme's mysticism, an aspect by no means the least attractive of the several forms in the Lausatian shoemaker's writings.

The first tract ¹ has the title Von wahre Busse, and it was written by 1 June 1622. Upon completion it was sent to Rudolf von Gersdorf. ² Boehme calls it 'the beginning and entrance into the theosophical school, ³ born in the anxious fire, descriptive of the process which he himself went and by which he attained the pearl of the divine knowledge. When this work was circulated among the friends of Boehme it made quite a stir, especially among the lesser nobility of Silesia, Lausatia, and Saxony. Appended to Busse there is usually printed a short work, sometimes known as Schlüssel, written 9 February 1623. ³

The second tract of the Way to Christ is the unfinished Vom heiligen Gebet, ⁴ a beautiful Prayerbook which was begun in the middle of June, 1624, and therefore is one of the last

1 Buddecke, Verzeichniss der Handschriften, p.xx.

2 Epist., xxv, 3.

3 Buddecke, op.cit., p.xx.

4 Sometimes Busse is referred to as Gebet.

works which Boehme worked at.

The third tract, Von der Wahren Gelassenheit, was written in 1622, probably immediately after Busse.

The fourth work, Von der Neuen Wiedergeburt, was completed in June 1622,¹ probably immediately after Busse and Gelassen.

Von Uebersinnlichen Leben was composed in 1622 and it was cast into dialogue form, as a discourse between a Master and a Disciple.

The sixth tract is an incomplete work, tending more towards the speculative side, written near the end of 1622.² According to Ueberfeldt, it is the rejected beginning of the Mysterium Magnum.³

The most gracious of the tracts from the literary point of view -- in fact, one of the great mystical tracts of all time -- is the Gespräche Einer erleucht- und unerleuchteten Seele.⁴ It was completed before 25 Marck 1624.

The last work was written in March 1621 and therefore really belongs both chronologically and by contents to Boehme's first period.⁵ Its title is Trost-schrift von Vier Compexionen.

Taken together, these eight tracts present another Boehme from the alchemical pansophist of the earlier period -- a Boehme whose alchemy was receded and who seeks, not knowledge of the mysteries of good and evil, but contemplation of God and

1 Buddecke, op. cit., p.xx.

2 Ibid.

3 Ausführlicher Bericht, (1730 edition), p.37.

4 Buddecke, op. cit., xxi.

4 Ibid.

even the marriage of the Lamb. (Busse,ii,1) In language almost Zinzendorffian in warmth he speaks of this ultimate union:

When Christ -- that cornerstone within the tarnished human image -- moves himself in man's heart-felt conversion and repentance, then, through this movement of Christ's spirit within the tarnished image, the Virgin Sophia appears before the soul in her Virgin's finery. At this the soul in her impurity is so frightened that all her sins are waked up within her, standing terrified and alarmed before her. For judgment then passes over the soul's sins so that she falls back again into her unworthiness, being ashamed before her lovely suitor. She begins to castigate herself introspectively as altogether unworthy to receive such a treasure. Those who are of us and who have tasted this heavenly treasure understand this; others not. But the noble Sophia approaches the soul's dark fire with her love-rays and penetrates through the soul with her love-kisses. Then triumphantly the soul jumps up in its body for great joy, and with the vitality of this virgin love praises the great God -- the might of the noble Sophia. * (Busse, i,45.)

He adds:

For the consideration of the reader who perhaps has not yet been in this wedding-chamber, what transpires when the bride embraces the bridegroom. Perhaps he will want to follow us and join the choir where one plays with Sophia. * (Busse, i,45)

Here the alchemical tincture is metaphorical, and the way to mystical union is no longer wholly an alchemical process, but through repentance, resignation, and the mystical marriage.

Boehme further describes this mystical union, a process which he says he ~~experienced~~, in the literary form of a dialogue between the soul and Sophia. This dialogue opens by the soul thanking God that He has redeemed her from the anguish of the 'fiery driver'. Sophia answers:

I have indeed broken into you through the deep gates of God, through God's angel, through hell and death, into the house of thy misery; and have graciously bestowed my love upon thee, and delivered thee from the chains and bonds wherewith thou wast fast bound. (Busse i,49)

After admonishing the soul and warning it of the possibility of faithlessness, Sophia yields the 'pearl':

Wrap yourself up therefore in patience, and take heed of the pleasures of the flesh. Break the will and desire thereof; bridle it as an unruly horse. And then I will often visit thee in the fiery essence, and give thee my kiss of love. I will bring a garland for thee out of paradise with me, as a token of my affection. But I give thee not my Pearl for a possession during this lifetime. Thou must continue in resignation, and hearken what the Lord playeth on His instrument in thy harmony in thee. (Busse,i,49)

Here is a significant alteration of Boehme's speculative focus -- a change which took place sometime around 1622. There can be little doubt that the bizarre, alchemical and pansophical speculations, however important they may be in the history of Boehme's own development, were rejected because they ended in a religious cul de sac. Two facts point to this conclusion: the scope and type of the books which he wrote after this mystical conversion; and secondly the changed symbolism in his views of the 'new birth', or regeneration.

Boehme no longer sought that knowledge which would resolve the tension between good and evil. Now he knew that knowledge was a false way and a false God, and that he could only be reunited with God if the tension between good and evil was overcome in his own soul, i.e., if he were born again. The story of this new birth is told in Gespräch zweyer Seelen, one of the most beautiful of religious myths, for in this

work Boehme describes, in mythological form, the story of the 'experience' of being born again. This may be the first emprical myth in religious literature in the west -- the first description of the new birth as an inner experience rather than as a conversion of mind. Here Boehme describes man's own inner spiritual life: his creation, temptation, fall, redemption, and ultimate reunion with God. He ends this simple, direct, and beautiful tract thus:

And thus the soul through repentance, faith, and prayer, returned to its original and true rest, and became a right and beloved child of God again; to which may He of His infinite mercy help us all. Amen.

The man who wrote this was certainly a religious man, a changed being from the person who claimed all knowledge, from the man who wrote Seel. Frag., who had railed against objective evil in Aurora, Princ., and Dreyfach. He had fought with the devil and he had sized him. He knew evil's strength. Now he was a mystic in the old German sense of the word.

What had wrought this change? What great discovery led the Görlitz shoemaker to this Busskampf? The later writings after June 1622 are silent about this tremendous upheaval, even though the fact of such a conculsion is plainly evident from their character?

The Boehme of Der Weg zu Christo still seeks knowledge, and he is thus still a 'gnostic' mystic in a superficial sense; but the nature of that knowledge has changed beyond recognition. Now it is but a metaphor:

It is necessary for the children of God to know how to behave themselves when they will learn the way of God. They must beat down and cast away their thoughts; and desire nothing, nor have the least will to learn anything, unless they find themselves to be in true resignation; so that God's spirit leads, teaches, and guides man's spirit, and that the human will which is attached to itself, be wholly broken off from its own lust, and resigned to God. All speculation in the wonders of God is very dangerous, for the spirit of the will may soon be captivated therewith, unless the spirit of the will goes or walks after the spirit of God, and then it has power in the resigned humility to behold the wonders of God.

And this from the pen of one of the great speculative minds of modern times! But he continues:

I do not say that a man should search and learn nothing in natural arts and sciences; no, such knowledge is useful to him; but a man must not begin with his own reason. Man ought not only to govern his life by the light of outward reason, which is good in itself, but should sink with that light into the deepest humility before God, and set the spirit and will of God foremost in all his searching, so that the light of reason may see and know things ~~through~~ the light of God. (Gelassen., 14-16)

Boehme thus achieved a new form of speculation; he became a theologian, a man whose thinking and gnostic rationation was built upon faith.

Boehme seeks a new kind of knowledge. not because the results of knowledge were false, but rather because they could not save. Now the world itself must be sacramentalized. In the earlier writings his knowledge was a false knowlegde. He railed against the arrogant learning of the schools. Now he discovers that smch knowledge was the reault of another facet of man's nature, his will. Knowledge, like other things, is either good or evil, according to the will that motivates it.

The most striking change is in Boehme's doctrine of sin.

In the Aurora sin was a dark and mysterious force, the subjugation of which could be wrought by understanding and knowledge. But now sin is man's disobedient and separated will -- his will to be a God (gleich Gottes). (Busse ii,1f) This was his great change. He concludes:

God hardens no man; but man's own will, which goes on in the fleshly life in sin, hardens the heart. The will of self brings the vanity of this world into the mind... God so far as he is called God, and is God, cannot will any evil, for there is but one will in God, and that is eternal love, a desire of that which is His like, viz. power, beauty, and virtue. God desires nothing but what is like his own desire! His desire receives nothing but what itself is. (Gelassen.,22f) 1

The end of religion, of life itself, is resignation and regeneration, and, although he never says so in so many words, he does imply that the more the selfish will does the more the will of God is born. (Gelassen., passim) The tenor of these tracts is similar to that of the Theologia Germanica -- but only similar, for however much he may have been indebted to the German mysticism of the past, he does add new principles, like that of the final restitution of all things, and like that of the total regeneration of all substantial existence. These eschatological symbols have the power of poetic realizations, and when he thought about the final end he was a poet. He conceived of it as that time when the noble lily-branch will blossom, when the thorns and nettles no longer will choke it.

1 This is an old idea of German mysticism, and it is thus expressed in the Theologia Germanica: 'Thus setting up of a claim, and this I and Me and Mine, these were his going astray.' Chapter 2.

(Gelassen.,46) He sees it as the gaining of the 'pearl of great price', or the pearl of great wisdom, which cannot subsist amidst the outward, bestial flesh. (Wiedergeburt,98) These images of the end to be discovered through mystical resignation entered into the hymnody of Pietism and thus became a part of the furniture of the German folk mind, finding their expression in folk art and folk decoration:

If ever he will attain the love and marriage of the noble Sophia, he must make such a vow as this in his purpose and mind. For Christ Himself says: 'He that forsaketh not wife and children, brethern and sisters, money and goods, and all that he hath, and even his earthly life too, to follow me, is not worthy of me.' Here Christ means the mind of the soul; so that if there were anything that would keep the mind back from it, though it should have ever so fair and glorious a pretence or show in this world, the mind must not regard it at all, but rather part with it than with the love of the noble Virgin Sophia, in the bud and blossom of Christ, in His tender humanity in us, as to the heavenly corporeality. For this is the flower of Sharon, the rose in the valley of Jericho, wherewith Solomon delighteth himself, and termed it his dear love, his chaste Virgin which he loved; and indeed all other saints before and after him did; whosoever obtained her, called her his pearl. (Busse, I,29)

Here the imagery of Song of Songs becomes the mystical symbolism of divine union, but union, not between God and the soul, but between Wisdom -- Sophia -- and the soul. The Ungrund of the Godhead remains inviolable.

Now here we may rightly understand what our new birth, or regeneration, is; and how we may become, and continue to be, the temple of God; though in this lifetime, according to the outward humanity, we are sinful, mortal men. Christ in the human essence hath broken up and opened the gates of our inward humanity, which was shut up in Adam. So that nothing now is wanting, but that the soul draw its will out from the vanity of the corrupted flesh, and bring it into this open gate in the spirit of Christ. Great and strong earnestness is required here; and not only a learning and knowing, but a real hunger and thirst

after ~~that~~ which I want, so that I draw it thereby to myself, and lay hold on it my own; this is the truth and essence of a Christian's faith. The will must go forth from the vanity of the flesh, and willingly tiel'd itself up to the suffering and death of Christ... (Wiedergeburt, 88)

This new birth is a substantial regeneration which is never wholly fulfilled in this life, but it always remains here incomplete, dependent upon the final restitution of all things. Thus the mysticism of Jacob Boehme's last period is certainly not centered in nirvana. His ecstasy is tame compared with that of the medieval nuns -- with the Ebeners, Mechthild, and Juliana of Norwich. The real 'wedding of the Lamb', Boehme says, is 'the passing from history to substance'. (Wiedergeburt, 97.) Consider this! Passing from history to substance! The medieval nuns were melted into the abyss by the passion of the kiss of peace; even Catherins of Genoa, interpreted by the sane von Hügel, was an ecstatic, endowed with psychical and physical reactions to her mystical experiences. But not so with Boehme. Along side of these erotics he was a dull and prosaic traveler.

In the growth of his mystical genius, in his second great conversion, Boehme's great achievements are apparent. 1622 is the great watershed. It divides the pansophist and semi-chemist of the first years from the profound Christian theologian of the last.

IX. THE MATURE THEOLOGICAL WORKS

8 February 1623 Boehme completed a large tract bearing the title: De Electione Gratiae, von der Gnadenwahl, oder Von dem Willen Gottes über die Menschen. Prunius says that Boehme¹ wrote it at the request of a nobleman, and the prevalent Crypto-Calvinism, particularly among the Silesian nobility, adds point to this statement. Boehme considered it his finest work (Clavis 147) and many modern readers are inclined to agree with him. Writing of it in a letter to Friedrich Krause, Boehme said:

I have written a pretty large book concerning Election, in that all those questions, and more, are set down at large, and determined in the deepest ground. And I hope that the same shall put an end to many contentions and controversies, especially of some points betwixt the Lutherans and the Calvinists, and other controversial sects besides, for there the true ground is set down at large before their eyes, and every one's opinion is satisfied, and the two contraries one, as it were, united in one body; if any shall be able to see, know, and understand the same, against the poison of the devil (Epist., xxxix,5)

In another Letter to the same person he further explains the purpose of this work:

Upon the advice of yourself and Mr.N., I have considered those sayings of Scripture which Mr N. set down in his letter, which you delivered to me, wherein I was exhorted to ~~expound~~ the same in Christian love, according to my gift and understanding, but especially the ninth and eleventh chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans; at which reason ~~stumbleth~~... Now altogether this treatise be somewhat large, yet, let not the reader account it tedious and irksome; for I thought ~~it of~~ little importance for me to go about and prove and clear such a writing without sufficient ground. (Epist., xl,2ff)

This sufficient ground is more fully explained in his letter to Franckenberg:

This work is so deeply and profoundly grounded, that not only the ground of this question concerning God's will may be understood; but likewise the hidden God may be known in his manifestation in all visible things, with a clear explanation how the ground of the great mystery has brought itself through the expression or outspokening of the divine science, through the word of God... into a severation and comprehensibility of the creation; and how the original of good and evil in the severation of the divine science in the great mystery, in the eternal principles, is to be understood. In which the hidden God may ... be understood in His being and will... what likewise the ground of all mysteries is ... and then a clear explanation of the phrases of Scripture; especially the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans... Yet not in a logical way, as 'tis treated on in the schools; where they make only objections and contradictions one against the other, contriving knotty arguments and dilemmas; the one will not prove and examine the ground and meaning of the other in a sensual way in the understanding; whereupon they hand, urge, judge, condemn, for a heretic and revile one another. (Epist., xli, 5ff)

To Gottfried Freudenhamer he wrote:

The words of Scripture are true about election; but they are not understood ar^oght, and thence comes the great evil and mischief with contending and eager contests. (Epist., xxix)

Just as Luther's genius discussed the profound problems of election and free will in his De Servo Arbitrio, so Boehme's attention now is turned towards the theological problem of determinism. And his manner of handling it is for him new. Never before had he discussed a problem in the manner he now does, with complete dependence upon Scripture. He diligently culled out the various passages of Scripture which deal with the question of election, put them together into a coherent and moving book. But he did more. With careful correlation he omitted those aspects of his own specu-

lations which did not fit into this new system.

Gnadenwahl is mainly directed against false reason. Boehme's writing often lapses into the catechetical question and answer form: 'Reason says...answer!' Or, he simply may address false reason directly:

Hearken, thou blind Babylon, concealed under the purple mantle of Christ like a harlot under a chaplet of flowers, who is full of the lust of fornication and yet calls herself a virgin/ What is the election and the grace with which thou comfortest thyself, and spreadest this mantle of grace over thyself, over thy whoredom and vices of all malice and wickedness? Where does it stand in the Scriptures that a harlot can become a virgin by a royal warrant or a gift or favour? What emperor can make a deflowered woman through his favour and good will? Can that indeed be? But thou wilt say: Christ has once for all fulfilled it for me, and satisfied the law. Answer: That is true, but what is that to thee, who art and livest out of Christ? If thou art not in Christ, in the sphere of actually operative grace, thou hast no part of him. (Gnad.,x,28-29)

This is a new and vigorous style, born of an inspired heart. Now he has something vital to say.

The key to his solution to the problem of election, indeed, to his entire theological system, is this amazing statement: No Grace from without avails! Considered in the light of Boehme's metaphysics it is illuminating, for it rejects at one stroke the legal, or Anselmic, view of the atonement. It asserts that Grace is an uncovering, an unveiling, or an unmasking of the deus absconditus within man's own being by the attraction and drawing merit of the flesh and blood of Christ. For

it is not the individual born of man and woman from the corrupt nature that attains to the Grace of filiation, so that he can comfort himself and say: 'Christ hath done it! He freed me from sin! I need only believe that it is done! No! The devil likewise knows this... Now what

is this will which they must do to attain this filiation? ...For Christ's will is the will of God, and they who would do this will must be ~~new~~ born from Christ's flesh and blood, from the word which became man, which cancelled death and sin in humanity and transformed them into love, and must put on the merit of Christ in the soul, and by the inward incorporate ground of grace become the living Christ. (Gnad.,x,29-31)

He says further:

Not by comfortings from an adopted external shine or lustre, but in an essential way, as self-subsisting children of Christ, in whom the inspoken covenant of Grace is fulfilled substantially, in whom the soul eats of Christ's flesh and blood, has life, and that not from without, but in itself, in whom Christ continually saith to the fiery soul in God's righteousness, ~~Take~~ eat my flesh and drink my blood, so abidest thou in me and I in Thee. (John vi,56). (Gnad.,x,32)

Here is a rich and significantly Protestant form of mysticism -- a unio mystica predicated upon a proper observation of the Lord's Supper. It is wholly spiritual, and became possible after the 'idolatry of the mass' had been attacked by the Reformers. Only upon the Protestant and mystical view of the Lord's Supper, as taught by Osiander and by Schwenkfeldt, could this form of mysticism be built. Yet the union is only imperfectly attained in this life. It is dependent upon the final resurrection for its fulfillment:¹

Therefore it is not now a question of external knowledge, as that I know I have in Christ a gracious God who has cancelled sin in humanity; but rather the matter lies in this: 1) That such take place likewise in me; namely that Christ, who has risen from death, rise up also in

¹ This point is important and should be stressed. The union here described was not 'experienced' by Boehme, but it was rather the core of his thought -- the final and irreducible center of his system. He did not achieve that actual union of his self with the great divine self. This remained for the final resurrection and restitution of all things.

me, and rule over sin in me. 2) That he kill sin, viz., nature in its evil will, in me; that the same will in Christ also be crucified and slain in me. 3) That a new will proceeding from nature in Christ's spirit, life, and will arise in me, which has God for its object, and lives in Him and is obedient to Him. This will fulfills the law, that is, it gives itself up in obedience to the law and fulfills it with the Divine love-will, so that the law in its righteousness becomes subject to the love-desire, and moreover rejoices in the love. (Gnad., x,34.)

Here is the renewed Boehme, the man who knew that Christ was victorious, and who sought to adjust his speculative system to this new insight -- the mysticism of the new being in Christ Jesus. This form of mysticism, closely related to Paul's, is the final flower and fruit of Boehme's troubled and anxious heart. In the Aurora two tendencies had emerged, born of the troubled and confused reason and passion in Boehme's age: the tendency towards the investigation of nature and a tendency towards the devotional piety inherent in Lutheranism and German mysticism. Now, in the year 1622, the second tendency came to the fore. Before Boehme had been a natural philosopher; now he was a Lutheran of deep piety, opening his heart in Busskampf to be seized by the Grace of God.

Then the wrath of God sinks down from the soul, and the soul is released in the love-spirit from pain, and lives in God. Now, this implies earnest repentance, in which the poor soul opens wide its jaws or fiery mouth in God's purpose of wrath, and in the incorporate grace lays hold of the promise of Christ, that He will give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask Him. (Luke xi,13) This offered Grace must be comprehended through the soul... Accordingly faith is not an outward thing, that any should say: 'With this is the election of Grace, for Christ is taught and acknowledged; he has chosen us before other peoples, that we may hear his voice. And

though we are wicked, yet he has forgiven us our sins, in his purpose, and slain them in the merit of Christ. We need only appropriate this and comfort ourselves therewith; it is imputed to us from without and bestowed on us as a grace! No! No! This is of no effect. Christ Himself is the imputed Grace, the gift along with the merit. He who hath Christ in him, and in whose inward ground Christ Himself is, he is a Christian, and is crucified and dead with Christ, and lives in His resurrection. To Him is imputed the Grace in Christ's spirit and life; for he need not suffer himself to be hanged on a cross, but he puts on Christ with his entire merit; and takes his yoke upon him. But it is not a question merely of knowing and taking comfort, for Christ dwells not in the body of iniquity. (Gnad., x, 35-38)

And the ~~final~~ paragraph of mystical triumph:

If Christ is to arise in thee, then must the will of death and of the devil die in Thee. For Christ has beoken death to pieces and destroyed hell, and become Lord over death and hell. When he makes his entry in a man, there must death and hell in the inward ground of the soul break and give away. He destroys the devil's kingdom in the soul, and makes the soul into God's child and into His temple, and gives it His will, and slays the will of the corrupt nature, that is, he transmutes it into the true image of God, for it is written: Christ is made ~~into~~ us righteousness through his blood. (I. Cor. i, 30) Now, if a man will have this righteousness, he must drink this blood, that it may justify him; for justification takes place in the blood of Christ in man, in the soul itself, and not through an external, imputed, alien shine or lustre, God gives his free gift of grace in ourselves for a new life, which slays sin and death, and sets us before God as children of Grace. For Christ with his blood of love in us fulfills God's righteousness in the wrath, and transforms it into Divine joy. (Gnad., x, 38-39)

Here is the final culmination, the irreducible end of his groping speculations which led him to search for the meaning of life and for the ultimate basis of his existence. And the whole range and extent of his growth is remarkable. From the primitive, halting words in the Aurora to this clear and concise theological writing is a big step, both from the

literary as well as from the theological point of view.

This is, of course, the Christ mysticism of Paul -- perhaps the highest that Christianity has to offer. Here is none of that cheap ladder-climbing mysticism characteristic of those minds which follow in Alexandrine traditions. Here is a mysticism of a God who descends into the human heart and possesses it in Love.

All that Boehme wrote before this amazing book was prefatory. Now he has found the place where his Pearl is to be found; although he has not yet possessed it finally within his own person. He is still a creature because there is a great gulf which separates him from his God in Christ. He is not united with Him. The God-man dualism is not bridged, or else he could not pray this:

O deep Grace of God! rouse thyself once again in us poor, confused, blind children, and pull down the throne of Anti-Christ and of the devil, which he hath built up in hypocrisy, and let us once again see thy countenance. O God! the time of Thy visitation has come/ but who recognizes thy Arm before the great vanity of Anti-Christ in his Kingdom that he hath built up? Destroy thou him, Lord, and break down his power, that thy child Jesus may be revealed to all languages and peoples, and that we be delivered from the might, pride, and greed of Anti-Christ. Hallelujah! From the east and north the Lord roars with his power and might; who shall prevent it? Hallelujah! His eye of love sees into all lands, and his truth remains eternally. Hallelujah! We are delivered from the yoke of the oppressor, no one shall build it up anymore; for the Lord hath shut it up in his wonders. Hallelujah!
(Gnad., x, 49)

Near the end of 1622, even before Gnad. was finished, Jacob Boehme began his second great theological work, bearing the title in ms:

De Mysterio Magno./ Dass ist./ Von der Offenbarungh
Göttliches Worttes durch die drey Principia / Göttlicheß
Wessenss...

This work was finally completed 11 September 1623, but already in February 1623 a total of 48 signatures had been finished. (Epist,,xxii,6) It is certainly the most ambitious work which Boehme undertook, for it consists of 78 chapters. It is a rich commentary on genesis, and structurally it is built about that book, though the exegetical principle which Boehme adopts makes it more than an ordinary commentary upon the meaning of the text. It does, indeed, imply both a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of history, for in writing about the **genesis** of the world Boehme believed that he could also describe the origin of nature, history, and the process of redemption. This was the old idea¹ of Joachim of Flora who believed that history divided itself into three ages -- that of the Old Testament, that of the New Testament, and the Dispensation of Grace. Boehme proceeds to analyze the age of the Old Testament as recorded in Genesis in order to show both the record of creation and the prophecy of the future dispensation of Grace. In the Preface he says:

And we will enlarge this exposition through all the Chapters of the First Book of Mosis and signifie how the Old Testament is a figure of the New; what is to be understood by the deeds of the Holy patriarchs; wherefore the spirit of God did give them to be set down in Mosis; and at what figures of these written histories do look, and aim; and how the spirit of God in His children before the times of Christ did allude with them in the

1 d. 1202. This Calabrian monk wrote a harmony, Concordance of the Old and New Testaments (Concordia utriusque testamenti); also, Enchiridion super apocalypsin; Psalterium decem chordatum). In this work the exegetical principle which Boehme adopted was used. Paracelsus knew the writings of Joachim, and they were well known in Germany during the 16th Century. Cf. Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, 41f, et passim.

figure concerning the Kingdom of Christ; whereby then God hath always represented His mercy seat -- Christ; by whom he would blot out His anger and manifest His grace. And how the whole time of this world is portrayed and modelized, as in a watch-work; how afterwards it should go in time; and what the inward spiritual world, and also the outward material world, is; also what the inward spiritual man of the essence of this world, is; how time and eternity are in one another, and how a man may understand all this. (Preface 12,13)

The English translator, Sparrow, states in the Preface to his 1654 English edition:

Infinite are the mysteries mentioned in Scriptures concerning God, angels, men, the world, eternity, time, the creation, fall, sin, corruption, the curse, misery, death, judgment, hell, devils, damnation; Christ, redemption, justification, salvation, free grace, free will, resurrection, Paradise, the Holy Ghost, sanctification, restitution, blessedness, eternal life, and glory.

This is an outline of a systematic theology and it is also the outline of Boehme's book. Each figure in Genesis, Boehme believed, had a threefold meaning: its literal meaning, its allegorical meaning in terms of Christ and the second dispensation; and its meaning with reference to the ultimate dispensation. This is, in reality, a simplification of the medieval four-fold method by combining trope and anagoge. When Boehme writes about Adam he suggests that Adam has three meanings: he was the first man, the symbol of the new Adam, and the promised word of the Paraclete.

Into such a structural framework Boehme fits the entire theological system. The seven days of creation become the seven spirits of God as well as the seven natural principles. All of his philosophical theology is here constructed upon this Biblical basis, and the work assumed the proportions of

a tour de force.

Indeed, it is difficult ~~yo~~ to see that the same man who wrote the Aurora is the same one who composed this work, the great mystery of creation. Consider the language of the Mysterium Magnum:

Wenn wir betrachten die sichtbare Welt mit ihrem Wesen, und betrachten des Leben der Creatured; so finden wir daran das Gleichniss der unsichtbaren geistlichen Welt, welche in der sichtbaren Welt verborgen ist, wie die Seele in Liebe, und sehen daran, dass der Verborgene Gott allem nahe und durch alles ist, und dem sichtbaren Wesen doch gantz verborgen. (Mysterium Magnum, i,1) (1)

Boehme has forged an adequate instrument for his ideas, and the man who wrote in this sort of a style was far more than a simple, uneducated cobbler, pegging at a spiritual last. Such style came from literary self-discipline.

In Mysterium Magnum, in addition to deepening the already known forms of his speculation, Boehme added new forms, especially a new category of philosophy -- his mystical philosophy of history. The third part of this work, sometimes printed as a separate tract bearing the title Iosephus Redivivus (Cf. Bibliography I) is a description of the new being in Christ -- 'the sleerest figure of the New Man regenerated out of the earthly old Adam', as the title-page of the London 1654 edition puts it. Joseph became the figure of the new man, the chaste

1 When we consider the visible world with its essence, and consider the life of the creatures, then we find therein the likeness of the invivible world, which is hidden in the visible world, as the soul in the body; and see thereby that the hidden God is nigh unto all, and through all; and yet wholly hidden to the visible essence.

virgin child of Sophia, the true Christian. Boehme's purpose is to present the nature of the finally restored humanity from the account of Joseph in Genesis. His method is clear from the following quotation:

He will wash away his garment in wine, and his mantle in the blood of the grape. That is, Christ will wash our humanity, viz. the garment of the soul, in the wine of his love, and with the love wash away from the defiled Adamical flesh the earthly dross and spawn of the Serpent that Adam had received with his desire and list, from which the earthly man became a beast; and leave the spawn of the serpent to the earth, and in the end burn it up with the fire of God.

And his mantle in the blood of the grape. The mantle is the cover which covereth the washed garment, and is even the precious purple mantle of Christ, viz. the scorn, affliction, torment and suffering; when he thereby washed our sins in his blood, that is, the right blood of the grape, wherein he washed his mantle, which now he casteth over our garment and covereth it, viz. over our humanity; that God's anger and the devil may not touch it. (Mysterium Magnum, lxxvi, 59, 60)

The entire commentary on Genesis considers the Bible as pointing forward towards the work of Christ and the final redemption of all mankind by the reunion of the opposing forces which manifest themselves in history. Boehme's mystical union in the historical sense was possible only when all of mankind had been redeemed. Individual men cannot be restored to their primitive harmonious God-Unity until all of mankind is redeemed. Just as mankind, and not individual men, fell when Adam fell, so all mankind will rise in the ultimate triumph of the new being in Christ Jesus. Boehme's mystical idea of the restitution of all things is a social idea: regenerated man is no longer man. Here there is a mystical philosophy of history which implies universal redemption -- a universal hypotheticus --

which looks forward towards an unpartheischen religion. Babel and Fabel will disappear. Good and evil will be superseded by that harmonious world in which the conflicting wills of man will be melted into the one and perfect will of God.¹ Life as we know it is the product of dialectical tension. But eternal life is beyond good and evil, and thus it is not dialectical. Ultimately good and evil will have but one will, God's.

In Mysterium Magnum Boehme traces the 'line of the covenant' of the ultimate redemption with infinite patience and skill.

Von Christi Testamenten, Boehme's next work, was written twice: the first time in November and December, 1623, and the second time after 1 April 1624.¹ The Autographs for the first composition survives.³ It consists of two separate tracts: one on Baptism and one on the Lord's Supper.

It has been noted already that Boehme's devotional mysticism ended in a mystical view of the Lord's Supper. Just as the mass was dependent for its meaning upon the Anselmic, or legal view of the atonement, so Boehme's mysticism was dependent upon the Protestant idea of the sacraments as evident in Caspar Schwenkfeldt. Test. is a thoroughly Schwenkfeldian work, thus confirming the tendency on Boehme's speculation which began with pansophistic nature mysticism, but gradually tended, more

1 E. Seeberg, Gottfried Arnold, die Wissenschaft und Mystik seiner Zeit, Meerane 1922, passim.

2 Buddecke, Verzeichniss der Handschriften, pp.xx,xxi.

3 Ibid., p.8.

and more, towards the thoroughly mystical and religious Innerlichkeit of the native German devotion.

Boehme composed several supplementary works, tables,
and keys to his larger writings.¹

In October 1624 he began an ambitious work, Betrachtung Göttlicher Offenbarung, but he died before much progress was made.

¹ Tafeln der drey Principien was composed 27 December 1623 and a second composition, February 1624; and Schlüssel der Vornehmsten Punkte was written in March and April 1624.

X. BOEHME AS AN APOLOGIST

Not all of Jacob Boehme's energies were spent in the solution of his own religious and speculative problems, for the Görlitz shoemaker was also involved in the intellectual discussions of his age. However much he disliked controversy, the necessity of defending himself as well as the courtesy of answering questions put to him, drew him into apologetical writing.

The first of his apologetical writings were two letters addressed to Paul Kaym, dated 14 August 1620 and 18 November 1620.¹ They form Boehme's answer to a tract by Kaym bearing the title Biblische Rechnung, wie lange die Welt gestanden und noch zu stehen habe.² Kaym was a chiliast and he wrote to Boehme asking the shoemaker's opinion concerning the date of the youngest judgment. Boehme refused to accept the precise chiliasm of Kaym, replying that

the manifestation of the thousand years Sabbath is not of much importance or concernment to the world, seeing we have not sufficient ground of the same, it should of right rest in the divine omnipotence, for we have enough in the Sabbath of the new birth. (Letzte Zeit, i,63)

It is said that Kaym became a follower of Boehme.

Balthasar Tilke was a Silesian nobleman who wrote a refutation of Boehme's Aurora on 13 April 1619. This refutation came into Boehme's hands during the year 1620,³ and it is

1 Ausführlicher Bericht, 41.

2 Letzte Zeit, i,63.

3 Ausführlicher Bericht, 38.

this first apology which was written in the beginning of 1621 at the latest, at the request of Abraham von Sommerfeldt, from whom it was that Tilke received a ms copy of the Aurora. In this Apology Boehme quotes long passages from Tilke's Pasquil, and it seems as if the point of objection which Tilke bore to Boehme's speculation was that he thought the shoemaker made Christ 'natural' and not divine. Tilke thought that Boehme tended too much towards making Christ just another man, and, in the light of the definite pantheizing tendencies of the Aurora this is certainly true. It was this objection of Tilke's which probably forced Boehme to alter his Christology.

Bedenken über Stiefel, an Apology, was completed¹ 18 April 1621, and it was written upon the advice of friends,² probably necessitated by politics, because on 24 February 1614 the Prince Elector of Saxony had signed a mandate with the title: Königliche Chur- und Fürstliche edicta und Verordnungen³ wider die Neueinschleichenden Schwärmer. It was directed against the enthusiasm of Ezechiel Meth and Esaias Stiefel, and declared them heretics and criminals. Boehme certainly wished to disassociate himself from this hair-brained fanaticism.

In this Apology, Boehme answers Stiefel's book which bore the title: Unterschiedliche Erklärung des Ersten Menschen vor dem Fall, des andern nach dem Fall, und des dritten vom

-
- 1 Ausführlicher Bericht, 38
 - 2 Buddecke, Verzeichniss, xx.
 - 3 Ausführlicher Bericht, 39.

oben aus Gott gebornenen letzten Adams, 1610.¹ This 'last Adam', Stiefel wrote, was his uncle, Ezechiel Meth. Boehme could not stomach this bland and arrogant pride, and there is no doubt that Boehme wrote these two apologies to dissociate himself from this group which had been so harshly condemned by electoral decree. It sought to avoid identification with such dangerous and hair-brained fanaticism, justly condemned in the Electoral Edicta.

In spite of the superficial similarity between the doctrines of these Schwärmer and Boehme there is deep and fundamental antagonism. Boehme wrote: Der Autor mangelt der Begriff von der drey Principien, His method of controversy was mild and loving, for he addressed himself to Stiefel so he might convert the mind. He does not rebuke.

The Second Apology to Balthasar Tilke was completed 3 July 1621,² and it is an answer to an attack made by the nobleman upon Boehme's Menschw. Tilke again takes up the discussion of Boehme's Christology and the doctrine of Predestination, the sore points in the Crypto-Calvinistic controversy. Boehme, drawn into disputation against his will, answers Tilke with mildness. Tradition says that Tilke was converted to Boehme's doctrines by this tract.

3 July 1621 Boehme finished another work against the

¹ Herzog-Hauck, PRE³, 'Stiefel'.

² Anti-Stief., 21.

³ Bäddecke, Verzeichniss, p.xx.

1

followers of Stiefel and Meth¹ in which there are long passages from Meth's work which Boehme proceeds to refute with diligence and effect. The theme of his refutation is Christological, and the manner is calm and persuasive, but with a tenor of firm conviction and deep-rooted feeling behind the writing.

3 April 1624 Boehme wrote an answer to the Görlitz Town Council, the livth Epistle, also considered as one of the Apologies.² It was a defense against the attacks of Gregory Richter.

Boehme also composed his Schutz-Rede wider Gregor Richter.³

These are the Apologetical writings of Boehme and the conditions which brought them into being.

1 Buddecke, Verzeichniss, p.xx.

2 Ibid., p.xxi.

3 Ibid.

XI. BOEHME'S LIFE: 1622-1624

Jacob Boehme, however, had a circle of disciples about him, men who hung on almost every word he wrote, who copied out his many writings with a devotion that was almost idolatry. In this circle there were the following: Carl and Michael von Ender, Christian Bernhard, Friedrich Krause, Abraham von Sommerfeldt, Hans Sigmund von Schweinichen, David von Schweidnitz, Balthasar Walther, Balthasar Nitsche, Johann Butowski, Gottfried Freudenhamer, Johann Theodor von Tschesch, Abraham von Franckenberg, and others. These men were the correspondents of the shoemaker, his champions/ indeed, there is even a suggestion that there was a secret society which had grown up about the shoemaker, a Sprachgesellschaft, in which his writings were assiduously studied. This was not a sect or church, but an 'Academy' of which Boehme was doubtlessly the spiritual leader. Some Boehmists see in this group the primitive beginnings of German Freemasonry, with Boehme as the first Grand Master.

In the early summer of 1621 Boehme was in Silesia, in Strigau, where there was a gathering of kindred spirits and a lively discussion. Boehme was discontented with the results of this discussion, for in writing to Koshowitz (3 July 1621) he tried to explain his ideas better:

In our late meeting I was ill disposed to such a discussion/disputation, for wine and sumptuous fare do hide the Pearl's ground, especially because I am not accustomed thereunto,

and at home I fare very meanly and soberly, and Mr N. was not sufficiently answered; but I offer to answer him, and all others that mean Christianly, let them but give me their questions in writing, and explain their opinions therein, that I may see what they conclude. (Epist., xv, 6)

The secretive nature of this group, while certainly adding to the interest, also complicates the task. There is some suggestive material, both biographical and historical, and then there are also Boehme's Letters. There can be no proper use of these materials until the chronology of these letters has been definitely established. The dates are untrustworthy, and the best now available is an inaccurate listing. In view of this deficiency the full influence of these men on Boehme's speculations cannot be fully estimated.

There are, though, some hints as to the nature of this material. In 1619 Boehme completed Princ. at Carl von Ender's. (Epist., ii, 11) He traveled widely, surely beyond the means of the simple tradesman that he was. He received financial and other aid from these men. He was a frequenter of their estates. Indeed, his letters are full of hidden references to secret meetings and to secret instructions. It is known that his finest work, Gnadenwahl, grew out of a disputation held at Krause's in Staritz. (Epist., xl, 2)

The exact nature of this association is not clear, though there can be little doubt that the effect of this group upon Boehme's spirit was large. He now had disciples -- not just farmers and mechanics, but nobility, who hung upon

each word that he wrote. That he was impressed by the men of quality who gathered about him is evident from the following passage in a letter to Carl von Ender:

Though I have not deserved it at your hands, and am but a stranger to you, therefore I acknowledge your kind heart herein towards the children of God; but because you are so very humble, and that for God's and His Kingdom's sake, and out of your highness of this world, do cast yourself, with your favour and love, into the plain humility of God's children, therefore, I do acknowledge it to be the fear of God, and a desire after the communion with the children of God, in which we are in Christ; all one body, in many members and creations. (Epist., vi, 2)

A shoemaker claiming equality with the nobility! And in the Seventeenth Century. Again, in a Letter to Abraham von Franckenberg:

Seeing, Sir, that you together with your brother Mr. H.S., and likewise the deep learned Doctors J.S. and J.D.K., are my very much respected friends; and in the Life-Tree of Christ my eternal fellow-members and brethren in Christ; and I as a fellow member (from a religious heart) do rejoice also with them, seeing God hath adorned and endowed them with understanding, and wisdom, and other Christian virtues; whom likewise I have acknowledged always as my favourable, charitable, and gracious masters; thereupon I have taken order that they should get a copy of this treatise among them, desiring and entreating them to deal one with another, in a Christian, brotherly way, and communicate it to each other for the transcribing of it. (Epist., xvi)

Franckenberg was not an idle nobleman, toying with secretive and occult groups, but a serious scholar of the German mystics. He had studied at Leipzig, Wittenberg, and Jena. He had studied Tauler, á Kempis, the Theologia Germanica,¹ Schwenkfeldt, Weigel, and Johann Arndt earnestly. He learned to know Boehme late in the latter's life, probably only in 1623,

1 Peuckert, Rosenkreutzer, pp. 260-261.

and therefore his influence upon the shoemaker would have been limited to his later writings. He became the first editor of Boehme's works, and one of the biographers -- indeed, he seems to have made Boehme his career.

In a Epistle to Johann Daniel Koschowitz, 3 July 1621, there is a revealing passage:

In our late meeting I was ill disposed to such a disputation... I will give them a fundamental, large, expositive answer, and not defend myself therewith in the ground of truth, not a Flaccinian, as N. supposeth, but I shall stand in the ground. For I teach no self ability without Christ to attain the adoption, much less with Mr. N.N., which wholly clasheth against the Scripture; for I am dead to all opinions in me, and have nothing but what is given me of God to know, and leave all you to judge whence I know what it is; that I as a lay, illiterate, unexercised man have to do with you who are bred up in the high schools, and must set myself against learned art, and yet in my reason I know not, without God's knowing to attain thereunto, but I look upon what God doth; but in the ground of my gifts I know well enough what I do in this purpose and intention; and yet it is no intention in me; but thus the time doth bring it forth, and thus He, who ruleth all things, doth drive and order it. Concerning our secret discourse (as you know) you be patient to go in that known process a good while; and in this beginning no other will be admitted; it may be well, in the seventh year, be accomplished in this process. (Epist., xv.)

From this and similar passages in the Epistles it is obvious that a secretive group did exist, and that their influence upon Boehme's productive spirit was large. But the exact nature of this learned society -- if such it was -- must remain hidden simply because it was a secret society, probably with elaborate ritual and pomp. That it was speculative is certain from the result it had on Boehme's thought.

These secret friends of Boehme's gave him his Latin Kunstwörter -- words which seem so foreign to his thought, which

cluttered his style and confused his mind. Had they left him to his own resources he would have forged an adequate, if not enviable, literary instrument to express his ideas.

But Boehme's old enemy, Gregory Richter, was still active. Boehme's travels, his spreading fame, his increasingly intimate association with the nobility, his indifference to the pastor's warnings, angered Richter. Rumors spread. Richter could not keep silent and he charged the shoemaker with heresy. Since the official confiscation of the Aurora in 1613 Boehme had to all appearances kept his word, for only Boehme's intimate friends knew of the new writings. Those works which were written after 1619 were privately circulated, and the stormy Richter was most likely ignorant of their existence:

Concerning the transcribing of my writings which I am to send, I cannot tell whether they may be so safely done by N., for he cannot hold his peace, and I often hear vain scoffing men speak of my writing, which I suppose comes from him. (Epist., iv.)

Therefore, it must have been quite a surprise to Gregory Richter to discover that several of Boehme's friends had printed a selection of Boehme's friends under the title Der Weg zu Christo, which appeared New Year's Day, 1624. This little book was sponsored by von Schweinich and it contained three simple, harmless tracts: Busse, Gelassen, and Wiedergeburt.¹ Simple devotional literaryre, to be sure, but not in the eyes of the jealous Pastor Primarius. Boehme certainly had maintained proper relations with his church; he had communed regularly; he had attended services; his sons, to all appearances, had been

1 Cf. Bibliography I.

catechized and confirmed. Richter thus had no ecclesiastical cause for complaint. Then, what was behind his anger? The answer seems to be that Richter was annoyed by the secret conventicles for Boehme's house was certainly one of the meeting places for the serious group of men who had gathered about the shoemaker. Richter accused Boehme of teaching in secret places (in heimlichen Winkeln) when Jesus taught openly. (Apol. Richter)

In any event Richter was active in stirring up trouble. He incited mobs to attack the shoemaker's house. Windows were smashed and Boehme was called vile names by Richter's henchmen as well as continually denounced from the pulpit. Writing to
¹
 Martin Moser, 5 March 1624, Boehme said:

The devil is terrified, that he must even burst for very anger, and thereupon hath raised up a great tempest out of his sea of death against me, and hath cast his horrible floods upon me; thinking thereby to overwhelm and drown me. But his violent streams have hitherto been altogether ineffectual; for the conquering trophy of Jesus Christ had defended me, and smitten his poisonous rays unto the earth... The report or outcry which came unto you was nothing else but a pharisaical revilement and scorn by means of a scandalous, reproachful, lying pamphlet of one sheet of paper in the Latin tongue, wherein Satan has plainly set forth and laid open the pharisaical heart... And I confidently believe that the grossest devil did dictate the pamphlet, for his claims are manifestly and plainly therein discovered; that it may be clearly seen that he is a liar and a murderer. (Epist., 1)

Richter's Broadside here mentioned was printed 7 March 1624 and it complained that there were as many errors in Boehme's book as there were pages; it smelled of wax and shoemaker's blacking; that it was full of blasphemies; that God did not want

1 The contents of this Letter show that it was written after Richter's Judicium had been published. The date of the Judicium was 7 March. Whether the Letter or the Judicium is wrongly dated is not so clear.

his honour proclaimed by heretical shoemakers, tanners, tailors, wives, spiritualists, and doctors; that the old Arian heresy was not nearly as bad as this new one, for the shoemaker denied the infinity of God and taught quaternity instead of ¹trinity.

Richter also spread the charge that Boehme was an arrogant and presumptuous ²man who pretended to have knowledge which he did not possess. He accused the shoemaker of becoming befuddled every day with brandy, beer, and Schnapps, 'all which', Boehme replied, 'is untrue and he himself is a drunken man.' (Epist., lii,1) Richter wrote to Pastor Fries in Liegnitz and asked him to denounce the heretic from his ³pulpit and to the Görlitz Town Council, which Pastor Fries did. The probability is that Fries was asked to denounce Boehme because the shoemaker was at this time visiting at the seat of von Schweinich near Liegnitz. But in the meantime Richter himself had demanded of the Görlitz ⁴Council that Boehme be clapt into prison as soon as he returned.

The Görlitz Councillors had read Boehme's book and they were unable to find offensive or heretical matter in it. The citizens generally approved of it. It was even said that the

1 The text is given in Jecht, Böhme, pp.70-71.

2 Fechner, Leben, liii.

3 Ibid.

4 The Görlitz Council at this time was composed of the following: Burgomaster: Wolfgang Stolberger; Consules: Fr. Schwettig, Bartholom. Jakobi, M. Christ. Staude; Scabini: C. Cunrad, B. Hagendorn, Fr. Beyer, Nath. Scultetus, Wigand Miller v. Mollerstein; Senatores: F. Förster, Tob. Grautzke, Severin Schnitter, Syndikus M. Sebastian Krebs. Of these Christopher Staude (b.1580; d.1639) was a patron of the arts and sciences, and his brother, Daniel Staude, gave 100 marks to scholarship and placed his library at the disposal of the public. (Materials from the Archives of the Staude-Staudt-Stoudt family, c/o Ricardo Staudt, Buenos Aires, The Argentine.)

religion which Boehme taught was nothing new, and it is the very ground adopted by the ancient Holy Fathers, where more such like works would be found. (Epist.,liii,9) The Council could not resist the presure of the Pastor Primarius much longer because Boehme was obviously guilty of disobeying the Council's order of 1613 when he was forbidden to write. So he was hailed before the Görlitz Town Council on 23 March 1624. The municipal decree in the Minute Book of the Council reads as follows:

Anno 1624, the 23rd of March. As regards the shoemaker of this city, named Jacob Boehme, it is decreed that, on account of manifold complaint respecting his alleged pernicious doctrine, he be summoned before the Council and enjoined to seek fortune elsewhere. 1

On the 26th Richter's second Judicum appeared. In this writing the Pastor Primarius called Boehme the Anti-Christ, and in several vituperative passages Richter lampooned Boehme's claim to high knowledge.² On ~~this~~ same day Boehme again was called to the Council meeting. The Minute book thus records the proceedings:

Jacob Boehme, the shoemaker, and confused Enthusiast or visionary, says that he composed the book, The Eternal Life, (sic), though he did not have it printed, but that one of the nobility, Hans Sigmund von Schweinichen, had it printed. He was warned by the Council to seek fortune elsewhere, or in default of fair means this must be reported to the Illustrious Prince Elector. Thereupon he declared that he would take his departure as soon as possible. 3

Boehme already had received the summons to the Elector's Court, and he was awaiting the time of the Leipzig Fair to depart. Dr Cornelius Weisner, in his Wahrhafter Relation, describes this incident:

1 The text is given in Jecht, op. cit., p.43.
 2 Ibid.
 3 Ibid.

The Monday morning following, when the Magistrates were met at the Councill house, and sent for the false accused before them; they examined him, perceived ni evil in him, they found no anger nor dislike in words or in deeds or behaviour, to proceed from him; nor did they observe anything that was blamable; they asked him what hurt he had done the preacher? and therefore intreated most submissively and earnestly; that they in their wisdoms would send for the complainant, or Preacher, and cause him to say what he had done to him.

Upon which the whole Council concluded that it was just that the preacher should be friendly entreated to come to them, and required him particularly to signifie the gravimina or grievances, and thereupon sent two men of the Council, honourably to the preacher, and intreat him to come to them in the Council House, or particularly to relate those grievances to the members sent him.

Whereupon he was enraged, and sent them word what he had to do with their judgment house or Council House; what he had to say, that he shall speak in the place of God, from the pulpit, there is his Council House and the seat of his Profession; what he had there said, they should follow that, and banish the vain, wicked, reprobate heretic from the City, they should no more oppose the Holy Office of Preaching, and bring the punishment of Corab Datham and Abiram on the whole city.

Accordingly the Lords consutled, and could not find how they should justly help the Master; fearing the vehemency of their preacher in his pulpit; and concludud to banish the innocent Jacob Boehme out of the city, in which conslusion some men of the Council would not consent, but rose and went their way, but the rest execute, and by the executioners or city officers, cause the undondemned faithful citizen, to be instantly banished out of the gates.

Which the patient blessed man disliked not; but answered in the name of God, My Lords, I will do; but may I not go to my house first, and take mine along with me, or at least tell them my necessity? But they forbade it and he instantly was to be led from the Council house out of the City, with derision and scorn; then he said: Dear Sirs, let it be done seeing it cannot be otherwise. I am contented. So he was banished and gone away all night long. 1

The next day, the 27th of March, Richter has his Third Judicum published in which he rejoiced that the City of Görlitz finally got rid of Boehme. Jubilantly he asked Boehme to leave

1 Weisner, Wahrhaftiger Relation.

soon and move far away so that no curse shall descend upon the fair town of Görlitz. The dirt which the shoemaker had spewed forth contaminated the town. Richter then wrote a significant sentence: Du hast ganz Schlesien mit deiner Lehre angestecket! Weisner continues:

But the morning following (the 27th), when the Council were met together again, and had somewhat reconciled their disagreements, they made another conclusion, to hunt after the persecuted innocent man, and send up and down about the country to seek him, and at length found him, and brought solemnly and with honour into the City again, which was a wonder from God, in the midst of these acts and decrees of the devil. 1

Richter's judgment and jubilation was, then, a bit premature, assuming that Weisner's report is correct.

Boehme returned home and on 3rd April he wrote his Schriftliche Verantwortung to the Town Council in which he defended himself from Richter's accusations in a reasoned and temperate manner. He confined his defense to Richter's printed accusations and he did not admit the existence of his other writings. This is the 11th Epistle. After this Apology to the Council was completed Boehme began to write his answer to Richter himself. This was concluded 10th of April.

The violence of Gregory Richter's attacks upon Boehme had served to spread the shoemaker's fame, for the alarm Richter raised directed the attention of civil and ecclesiastical authorities to Boehme. Orthodoxy then was zealously guarded, not only by watchdogs of the Richter breed, but also by the authorities, who, under the provision of the various peace treaties, were the

'protectors' of the established church. The fear of schism was always present and, of course, the appearance of a shoemaker who wrote books was in itself a curiosity as appealing as the bears and camels exhibited at the Leipzig Fair.

After his brush with the Görlitz Council Boehme prepared for his journey to Dresden. He viewed the summons as a chance for vindication, and, it must be remembered, this summons had been made before the action of the town Council and therefore was not its result. Even before his affair with the Council he had promised to go to Dresden after the Leipzig Fair, so, on 9 May he started for Dresden by way of Löbau, Bautzen, arriving in the Electoral City sometime before the 15th.

Dresden was in jubilee, as Prague had been several years before when Boehme was there. From Hungary the Saxons had news that peace had been concluded between the Emperor and Bethlem Bagor. It was, of course, a temporary peace. English and Swedish soldiers were all about. Holland was quiet -- but the lull promised the storm.¹

Boehme was not unknown in the Electoral City. His close friend, Balthasar Walther, had been director of the Prince Elector's chemical laboratory, and he had spread the word of the Görlitz pansophist to his successor, Benedict Hinkelmann, in whose house Boehme lodged upon his arrival. Here he was offered all

1 Peuckert, Leben, p.132.

'Christian love and friendship'. Hinckelmann announced Boehme's arrival to the courtiers, and Boehme wrote that most of them had 'read his little printed book', making daily use of it.

Boehme wrote four Letters from Dresden to Kober in Görlitz, letters full of information about the happenings there. They show his enthusiastic acceptance of his newly found friends. Courtiers sought him out and held long conversations with him. Joachim von Loss invited the shoemaker to his castle for a visit and the Chief Master of the Horse, Major Stahlmeister, encouraged Boehme's suit with the Prince Elector. Some of these admirers even gave Boehme money to help defray his expenses, and they sought to continue the acquaintanceship permanently. In Dresden Boehme heard nothing of the 'tumults and roars' which had been his daily environment at home and he rejoiced in his successes, even defying Richter to press his charges at Court.

Boehme's host, Dr. Hinckelmann, was kind, entertaining him well and giving 'much good converse'. Boehme wrote that among the Elector's Council there were very 'Christian loving Gentlemen' who read and loved his writings:

For my printed book is already come into the hands of many officers and learned men, all which count it to be good, and a gift from God, and they labour and contrive how such things may be published. (Epist., lxi,1)

And the Herr Primarius's slanderous libel is very wonderfully looked upon by the Council and learned, and some suppose that the malicious spiteful spirit has dictated it to him, and he is despised by the priests who say he transgresses, and goes aside out of his office. For Herr Kinckelmann has shown it (Richter's Judicum) to the Council and to the learned, who wonder at the man's folly, that he dare vomit out his evil affections in public against a Christian book, some of the

chiefest Counsellors have caused their good will to be made known to me, and signified the soonest day that have opportunity, they will cause me to be invited to them, for a Christian converse and conference with me... My writings are here copied out.

Boehme's fourth Epistle to Kober says that a conference had been appointed at Hinkelmann's where Dr Aegius Strauch and others conversed with him concerning some points in his books which were not understood. Strauch openly and publicly commended Boehme's writings. Nowhere in these letters to Kober does Boehme mention the examination which traditionally was to have taken place at the Elector's Court. The later writers of the 17th Century such as Calov, Spener, and Gottfried ¹ Arnold assumed that this conference took place and their conclusions were based on two sources: Hegenicht's assertion that such an examination did take place and the long account of this examination in Weisner's Wahrhafter Relation.² The Pietists made a strong and persistent attempt to prove that Boehme's doctrines had been approved by the Lutheran orthodox theologians at Dresden, but they never quite succeeded.³ There is certainty however that some sort of an examination did take place, and the account given by Weisner, although not wholly inaccurate, is just about as near the truth as can be hoped for. Its accuracy is further attested to by the fact that Weisner's account of the proceedings at Görlitz is nearly in accord with the official records; thus is his general reliability established. Weisner wrote:

1 Cf. Bibliography II.

2 #12ff.

3 Peuckert, Leben, pp.136ff.

Concerning the Acts and Proceedings at Dresden, I know also and can certainly affirm authoritate aliorum fide Dignorum, & exceptione majorum, upon the authority of others worthy of belief and without exceptions, that the Blessed man of God as a hind hunted out and in, was cited to Dresden;

And was examined in the presence of the Illustrious Prince Elector, by the chief Doctors assembled together, whose names were as follows: Dr. Hoë, Dr. Weisner, Dr. Baldwine, Dr. Geryod, Dr. Leiser, and one Doctor more, which U cannot name at present, and Two Professors of the mathematics, and appointed to discourse about his writings; also in severall ways, set about with all sorts of theological philosophical, and mathematical questions, but not overcome by any of them nor confounded by any of them, but so rapidly and distinctly answered those ~~x~~aminers, and they said not one ill word of him.

But the Illustrious Prince Elector highly wondered at it, and desired to know the conclusion of their censure; but they the Doctors and Examiners excused themselves and entreated the Illustrious Prince Elector, that he would have patience; until the spirit of the men should be more plainly cleare to them; they could not understand him; but hoped he would hereafter more clearly be apprehended by them, and then they might and would give their judgments but as yet could not.

And then the deeply grounded divinely blessed man asked them again several questions, which they were to answer him in, with plain distinctions, not unwillingly, nor very earnestly, but occasionally, as it were, because they had heard such great things from such a simple lay man; beyonday their apprehension and not able to understand him; but they did not upbraid him, but expectantly the simple man held forth to the theologists, the truth plainly, and distinguished from the fictitious, he honoured them with great respect, and discoursed friendly with them, touched all their errors, and showed them with a finger the original of them.

But to the astrologers he (J.B) said expressly: Dear Sirs, thus far is the skill of your mathematics right, exact, and grounded upon the mysteries of nature; but whatsoever is beyond that: Viz., this and this, are heathenish additions, the ignorance and blindness of the heathens, which we Christians are not to follow.

So they left him quietly, and dismissed him in peace; also the Illustrious Prince Elector had great satisfaction in the answers; he required him to come apart by himself, and spake with him about all sorts of mysteries, and admitted to him in all favours, and gave him liberty to go to his house in Görlitz.

I cannot remember that I heard certainly more thereof, but I lately heard the two Drs. Meisner and Gerhard, at Wittenberg, speak of Jacob Boehme, that they wondered at the continuation or connexion and harmony or agreement of the writings of that man:

Dr Gerhard said, Indeed I would not for the whole world condemn that man; the other Dr Meisner answered him, nor I neither, my brother, who knows what may lie hidden in it, how can we censure what we have not apprehended, nor apprehend whether it be right, black or white. God convert the man if he be in error, and give us to understand that further and better, also a mind and apprehension to express it, and propagate it to our ability; besides this somewhat was said but I went away.

Another time I heard the Reverend Dr Meisner at Wittenberg say, when Jacob Boehme was spoken of, and being asked what judgment he would give of him, he answered, he desired neither to judge, nor procure that the man should be condemned or suppressed or silenced, he is a man with wonderful high gifts of the Spirit which a man can yet neither condemn or oppose.

It is therefore probably that Jacob Boehme was actually examined before these Doctors, although the Elector may not have been present at this examination.

The four letters which Boehme wrote to Dr Kober from Dresden reveal that the shoemaker was kind and solicitous to his family, a loving father, concerned for the welfare of his family during his absence. Boehme wrote to Kober to

treat with his wife, and tell her that she shall get patience, and give herself to quiet, and not be so fearful and dismayed, at it, as I perceive she is, for it is very well with me and I am preserved with honour and love... I intend, God willing, to take care of her and my children, let her but give herself to patience and peace... also there is a time coming wherein it will not be dishonourable to her; none know how to speak any disgraceful thing of us, but only one wicked man, who believeth us... Concerning my son Jacob (1), that he is come home, I rejoice, and desire back that he would stay in Görlitz till my coming, and not entertain dispute or make contention with any... that God's gifts be not scandalized... comfort my wife, that she may let go her fruitless care; there is no danger about me. I am at present well and better than in Görlitz. Let her stay at home and be at rest. (Epist., xli, passim)

In the second Letter Boehme asked Kober to signify

1 Young Jacob was at this time 25 years of age, and probably in the midst of his journeyman travels.

to my wife, that she should not perplex herself by reason of me, but diligently pray that God would order it for the best, and if she want anything she knows very well where she may have it, she should only keep herself within, and a little submit herself; this stormy tempest will soon blow over. (Epist., lxii, passim)

In the third letter Boehme asked Kober to

salute my wife and son, and let them read this, and exhort them to patience and prayer. I hope all will be well; they should have patience yet a little, who knows how the current may run? This persecution may serve for the best. I will within three weeks, if it may be, certainly come home... and exhort my son Jacob to wait, and that he should go often to Hans Berger to see what Elias (1) learns; and that he behave himself with his schoolmaster in love, to whom he shall present my salutation, and not conceal my purpose, that he may look upon it, as if there were any cause to flee from the Primate, and for that cause Elias might be abused and evilly treated by his schoolmaster. (Epist., lxiii.)

The fourth letter says:

My wife need not cause any window shuts to be made; if they will break them, they may, and then the fruits of the high priest will be seen; let her have a little patience. If she cannot get a place in Gorlitz, I will get a place for her somewhere else, where she will have quiet enough; but let her stay within at home and not go out except upon necessity, and let the enemy rage, but he will not eat her up... By this bearer I send two Reichsthaler to my wife for her occasions, if she want anything she knows well where she may have it; the key of the drawer lies in the parlour by the warming pan on the shelf... salute my wife and two sons from me and exhort them to Christian patience and prayer, and to purpose no self revenge... My Jacob shall stay at Gorlitz that his mother may have some comfort there until I can dispose it otherwise.

Boehme left Dresden only partly vindicated. He had no legal justification; neither had he been denounced as a heretic or schismatic. In comfort he fled to his new friends -- to von Schweinichen, von Schweinitz, and von Franckenberg. From the middle of June 1624 to the end of October Boehme was probably

1 Elias was thirteen years of age.

the guest at von Schweinichen's. Franckenberg repeats an old legend regarding this visit:

The blessed man, together with Mr David de Schweidnitz, and others, happened to be at the house of some gentlemen of quality. Now at Mr David de Schweinitz's, setting out from there, he desired the said gentlemen at whose house they were, that, after his discussion of J.B., he would be so kind as to forward him on his journey to his estate in Seifersdorf; which the gentleman also did. But a physician, who was much disaffected to the good Boehme, promised the lad who was to conduct him, a shilling, upon condition of his shoving him in some bog; which the lad faithfully executed. For being come to a great bog in the neighbourhood of Seifersdorf, he pushed the good man into it; who, in consequence was not only miserably bedaubed but having had the misfortune to pitch his head upon a sharp stone, he broke it terribly, that he lost a great deal of blood, when the lad saw this, being greatly terrified, he set up a crying, and ran to the gentleman's mansion house to tell what had passed. No sooner had Mr David de Schweinitz been made acquainted with what had happened but he ordered our good Boehme into the sheep-stall or barn, and there to have his wound dressed and his clothes cleaned. He also sent him other clothes to put on in the meantime. Being by now in a condition to come out, and his appearance in the house parlour, he shook hands with all there present. And as all Mr. David de Schweinitz's children were there placed in order by each other, and he was come to one of the daughters, having presented his hand to her he said: 'This girl is the best of all that are together in this room'; upon which he laid his hand on her head and pronounced a special blessing over her. And indeed, according to the abovesaid Mr. David de Schweinitz's own confession, this was the very best of all his children. It happened, that Mr. David de Schweidnitz's brother-in-law, together with his lady and children, were there in a visit at the same time; who, having been a great enemy to ... Boehme, made a fool of him, by calling him by way of derision a prophet, and challenged him to utter some prophecy. Jacob greatly excused himself, alledging that he was no prophet, but a simple man. He declared, that he had never given himself out for a prophet, and humbly entreated, that he would be pleased to excuse and let him alone. Still the gentleman went on to make a fool of him, and several times insisted upon his uttering some prophecy to him. And altho' Mr David de Schweinitz interposed, and entreated his brother-in-law to let the man alone, yet all was to no effect. At last, after our good Boehme had been so long instigated to it, he began thus: Since you will needs have it so, and I can have no rest from you, I shall be forced to tell you what you will not like to hear.

The gentleman, turning pale, rejoined that he might say what he pleased, whereupon he began and related what an ungodly, scandalous, and lewd life he had here and there lived to the time; how matters had gone with him on that account hitherto; and how they would go hereafter, all which actually ensued. This put the gentleman sadly to shame, and he became so enormously embittered and engaged, that he wanted to fall foul upon poor Boehme, had it not been prevented by the interposition of Mr. David de Schweidnitz; who, that the poor man might be at quiet, sent him with proper provisions to Pastor, P.T.8s with a request to harbour and entertain him, which he accordingly did; and having staid the night there, he was brought the next day back to Görlitz. 1

But his neighbours were not satisfied with his conduct.

The Görlitz citizens said of Boehme that he

frequented the company of the foremost Enthusiasts, he often had his raptus and quakings, so that he sat in his corner all day and night writing, even though previously he could neither read nor write. He brought great books home... (and wrote some) that the theologians and professors could not contradict. 2

And the sight of the short-statured, high-browed shoemaker, lugging great tomes to his home, was cause enough for strange stories to arise. For Boehme's spirit, while not illuminist as the Deists understood the term, was still esoteric in that he was a Volksmann who shared the primitive ideas of the strange inhabitants of eastern Germany. He was certainly a brooding melancholic, entirely typical of the people who lived near the Bohemian border. This was the land of primitive German folklores, and the legends and Aberglauben found their way into Boehme's writings. With Luther he believed that the devil was God's monkey (Princ.,xiv,530) He knew

1 Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #23. This incident took place between 1621 and 1624. On the riotous living of this family, Cf. Gustav Freytag, Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit, II, pp.426ff.

2 Quoted by Peuckert, Leben, 64, from Fechner.

that Hexe were Teufelszauberhuren (Princ.,xiii,37); that spirits rode fiery wagons through the heavens (Princ.,xix,23) and that the soul was a ray of light. (Princ.,xix,12)

Franckenberg thus records his last meeting with Boehme:

Having in the year 1624, been several weeks with us in Silesia, and having together with other edifying conferences upon the supremely happy knowledge of God and His Son, especially from the light of occult and disclosed nature; and at the same time finished the Three Tables concerning the divine revelation (dedicated to Johann Sigmund de Schweinich and myself, A. de F.) he was, after my departure, seized with a burning fever, and much swelled and bloated by an immoderate drinking of water; so that, at last by his own desire, he was brought in such condition to his own house in Görlitz...¹

This was November ²7th, 1624. Catharina Boehme was not at home; Dr. Kober cared for Boehme, but the physician knew that the end was near. He wrote:

As we could find no satisfactory cure, I, along with Christoph Kütter of Sprottau, concluded, that he should be buried without scandal...³

In the evening of the same day Kober requested Magister Elias Dietrich to question Boehme in matters of faith preparatory to the final administration of the Lord's Supper. Dietrich answered Kober's request with an official reply: Officio meo crastina Luce, vol. Deo non deero prascientia tamen Dn. Primario ob causas...⁴ M.E.Th. On 15 November at eight in the morning, Boehme, having continued to grow weaker, was examined by Dietrich in the house by the Neiss gate regarding his beliefs.⁵

1 Franckenberg, De Vita et Scriptis, #23.

2 Peuckert, Leben, p.140.

3 Umständiger Bericht,

4 Cf. Appendix II.

5 Peuckert, Leben, pp.140-141.

Primardus Thomas, Gregory Richter's successor, had given Dietrich permission to administer the Lord's Supper, provided that he obtained satisfactory answers to his questions. Dietrich's report,¹ delivered to the ecclesiastical authorities, lists in part the questions which were put to Boehme upon which absolution was finally granted.

The catechism was as follows:

Dietrich asked Boehme whether he believed that God was in essence and in substance One, and in person threefold?

Boehme answered, Yes.

Dietrich asked whether he believed that in the beginning God had created man in His own image, in true holiness and righteousness; that man, of his own self-will and beguiled by the devil, had turned himself away from God, and consequently fallen into temporal and eternal death and sin; that because of sin man must have been eternally punished had not God compassionately taken pity on him.

Boehme answered, Yes.

Dietrich asked whether he believed that in the Mediatorial person of Christ there are two distinct natures, divine and human; that by His divine nature He existed from eternity, equal in essence, honour, and glory to the Father and the Holy Spirit?

Boehme answered, Yes.

Dietrich asked whether he believed that only the mediator, and the only way to salvation, was Christ, who must be seized by us through real faith -- which faith is a gift of God?

¹ The report is in Okeley, Memoirs, pp.81-86. The translation here given is in Fechner, as in Earle.

Boehme answered, Yes.

Dietrich asked whether he believed that a Christian ought to lead a holy and blameless life, according to God's command, as far as possible in hac corrupta natura; yet with God he can gain nothing by this, according to the saying of Christ..., but is justified and saved by pure unmerited grace...

Boehme answered, Yes.

Dietrich asked whether he held the preached word and sacraments to be media salutia, to be used, not despised, but still not essential to God, for He can do without them. This the Magister says he illustrated simili exemplo.

Boehme answered, Yes.

Dietrich now asked Boehme whether, if God would prolong his life and restore his health, he would keep to Lutheranism, and abandon whatever disagreed with orthodoxy?

Boehme answered, Yes.

Dietrich then reminded the shoemaker that he was to be content with the revealed word, and not to dabble in revelations and visions, for a man might imagine something that never took place in reality.

Boehme answered that he had read the New Testament and that diligently.

Dietrich exhorted him to combine the Old and the New, for the Old Testament referred to the New, and the New to the Old. He insisted that the catechumen refrain from the writing of books.

Boehme then gave Dietrich an account of occasionem scribendi upon which the Magister did not comment.

Dietrich then asked Boehme whether he had partaken of the Lord's Supper lately.

Boehme answered that he had partaken, the last time being about three quarters of a year before in company with his wife and two sons in public church assembly. Catherina Boehme added that her husband had been absolved several times before by Herr Andree.

Dietrich then asked whether his ~~re~~pentance was in earnest and whether he desired the Lord's Supper in real earnest.

Boehme said, Yes.

Magister Dietrich then exhorted the shoemaker to consider what he was doing, for he might be able to deceive his fellow men but could never deceive God.

The Magister prepared to administer the sacrament, but before granting final absolution he once more interrogated the **shoemaker** with a view to better caution and defense contra calumniatorum morsus et Sathanae mendacia. Dietrich asked Boehme whether he considered himself a sinner.

Yes.

Dietrich asked whether he sorrowed with his whole heart for the sins he had committed?

Yes. Manibus complicatis, oculis elevatis.

He asked whether Boehme believed that for his sake and for his benefit Christ had died and shed his blood on the tree of the cross?

Yes, for He Himself says: 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

Dietrich then asked whether he believed that God, for Christ's sake, would pardon and forgive all his sins, and be gracious and merciful?

Yes, firmly.

Dietrich asked whether with God's help he would amend his life and so far as it were possible for him be on his guard against sin?

Yes.

Dietrich asked whether he was ready to pardon and forgive from the bottom of his heart everyone by whom he had been injured.

Yes, with my whole heart I forgive them, and desire of them like forgiveness.

Magister Elias Dietrich then heard his confession¹, absolved him, blessed the elements of bread and wine, and partook with Jacob Boehme of the Holy Communion.

Having thus communed, Boehme's body grew steadily weaker.
 Saturday. 16 November, he told his two friends, Hans Rothe and Michael Kurtz, that in three days he would enter a new world. Sunday at two in the morning, he asked his son Tobias whether he also heard the sweet music.

Tobias answered that he did not.

Then Jacob Boehme said: 'Let the door be opened, so as to hear the singing better.'

¹ The Knauthe Ms gives the date as 25th of September, following the reference in the Diarium of Hans Emmerich, a wealthy merchant of Görlitz.

Next he asked: 'What time is it?'

'Three o'clock.'

'My time is not yet. O thou strong God of Sabaoth, deliver me according to thy will! O thou crucified Lord Jesus Christ, be merciful to me, and take me into thy Kingdom.'

At six, before the City gates were open,¹ he bade farewell to his wife and children, murmured to himself, and finally gasped, 'Now I go hence to Paradise.'

Thus, with joyful mein, peacefully and perhaps even² happily, he died, being in the fiftieth year of his age.

1 Boehme lived outside the gates, and consequently his friends could not come to him till the gates were opened.

2 This account of Boehme's death is from Kober's Umständiger Bericht, #5,6.

BOOK TWO

JACOB BOEHME'S MYSTICAL SPECULATION

They say: What ails the fool? When will he
have done with his dreaming?

Well, well! You shall see what kind of a dream
this will be!

Aurora--

I. THEOGONY

1.

Jacob Boehme's fundamental insight, which derived from his mystical gnosis, was that in all things there is good and evil, or, as he finally says, In Jah Und Nein bestehen alle Dinge (Theos. Frag., iii,2). This insight led him to produce a solution to the problem of the final origin of being which would explain the generation of the world, its 'birth' and its development. Boehme was thus forced to postulate, as the final basis of his explanation of being, a last, or first, Source which is itself an unthinkable conception and an unrealized contradiction.¹ If all things exist because of the dialectical interplay of Jah and Nein, then this last source, the coincidentia oppositorum, is beyond such dialectical necessity. This last, or first source then must be the coincidence of contraries from which all

¹ Koyré, *La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, p. 303.

finite entities, all dialectic, proceed.

In thus describing God, the world, and man, Boehme was compelled to create a theogony. He was forced to explain how the dialectical interplay of Yes and No which he felt characterized all of existence came to be from a Source which is basically an Indifferent, a One. If Boehme wished to explain how the world of Realdialektik came from an originally single and unified Source, then he was compelled to adopt the literary form known as 'theogony' for he was forced to describe the generation of the gods. Boehme's problem, and the method which he used to solve it, finds its origin in the problem of evil. How did God separate himself into Yes and No? Or, what is the birth or geniture of all things? To what are all things tending? In Boehme's emanationary metaphysics the problem of theogony is central: how did God, and existence, come to be from a One and a No-thing.

Theogony and emanation are two separate, although in the end, related processes. Most Boehme students have identified them, but Boehme himself distinguished between theogony and emanation. The former constituted his attempt to explain how a trinitarian God came to be, while the latter sought to explain how the world of conflicting principles, of dialectics, arose. Boehme had two schemes: first, the self-generating Seven Spirits of God, and secondly, the seven natural principles. These two schemes are related, but they are not the same. As excellent a writer as Emil Bouttoux has failed

to grasp this underlying distinction between theogony and
¹
 emanation in Boehme's speculation.

Boehme knows well enough that theogony is myth, much as Plato's myths in the Republic. Theogony is designed only for better instruction and clarity.

But observe here rightly the earnest and severe birth or geniture, out of which the wrath of God, hell, and death are come to be, which indeed have been from eternity in God, but not liable to be kindled or to become predominant. For the whole or total God stands in seven species or kinds, or in a sevenfold form or generating; and if these births or genitures were not, then there would be neither God, nor life, nor angel, nor any creature. And these births or genitures have no beginning, but have generated themselves from eternity... These seven generations in all are none of them the first, the second, or the third, or last, but they are all seven, every one of them, both the first, the second, third, fourth, and last. Yet I must set them down one after another, according to a creaturely way and manner, otherwise you could not understand it: For the Deity is a wheel with seven wheels made one in another, wherein a man sees neither beginning nor end. (Aurora, xxii, 15-18).

This insistence is emphatic:

None of them is the first, and not one of them is the last: though I make a distinction and set the one after the other, yet none of them is the first or the last, but they have all been from eternity thus seated in the same equality of being. I must write thus by way of distinction, that the reader may understand it; for I cannot write mere heavenly words, but must write human words. Indeed, all is rightly, truly, and faithfully described: But the being of God consists only in power, and only the Spirit comprehends it, and not the dead or mortal flesh. Thus you may understand what manner of being the Deity is, and how the three persons in the Deity are. You must not liken the Deity to any image: for the Deity is the birth or geniture of all things. (Aurora, xxiii, 46-48).

Here already in his first work Boehme is conscious that his description of the spirits of God is myth, a mere literary

¹ Historical Studies in Philosophy, pp. 187ff.

expedient. It does not violate the ultimate mystery of the Godhead: This warning is frequent:

I cannot describe to you the whole Deity by the circumference or extent of a circle, for it is immeasurable, but the Spirit which is in God's love is not incomprehensible: That Spirit comprehends it well, yet but in part; therefore take one part after another, and you will see the whole. (Aurora, x,26.)

Although I write now, as if there were a beginning to the eternal birth, yet it is not so: but the eternal nature thus generates itself without beginning. My writings must be understood in a creaturely way, as to the birth of man... (Princ., iii,3.)

Courteous reader, observe the meaning right: we understand not by this description a beginning of the Deity but we show you the manifestation of the Deity through nature; for God is without beginning, and has an eternal beginning and an eternal end, which he is himself, and the nature of the inward world is like the essence from eternity. (Sig. Rer., iii,1)

The Deity is an eternal series which cannot break; He generates Himself from eternity to Eternity, and the first in it is eternally the last and the last again the first. (Princ., vii,14.)

We cannot formulate angelical words, and though we could do this, yet they would appear in this world no other than creaturely, and earthly to the earthly mind. (Dreyfach, ii,66.)

And I exhort the reader not to understand in an earthly manner the high spiritual meaning (when I speak of God and the generation of the Great Mystery), for I thus only indicate the origin from which the earthly has risen. And I must often speak so, in order that the reader may understand and reflect, and plunge into the inward ground: for I must frequently give earthly names to what is heavenly, because the earthly has been spoken forth therefrom. (Gnad. iii,19)

Thus does Jacob Boehme solve the tough problem of the prerogatives of mystical speculation, and the further question, certainly a perplexing one, does not seem to have bothered him:

the question of the relationship of this theogonic symbolism to reality. Admitting that his theogonic speculation is merely a literary expedient, admitting the necessity of symbolism in the description of God, the further problem of the symbolic reference, of the relationship of this theogonic and symbolic creation to the structure of reality itself is not comprehended. When God is mythologized, does Boehme violate the hidden mystery? Does he blaspheme? Schleiermacher considered all mythologies as 'vain mythology' and 'ruinous mysticism'. Indeed, this passage in the Reden of Schleiermacher seems to be directed against Boehme's seven spirits of God, for Schleiermacher felt that the complex genealogies of the Gods, the long series of emanations and procreations, were not religious, for they tended to 'break the highest unity: the idea that all that moves us in feeling is one.'¹ Boehme agrees with Schleiermacher, for both men recognized that the impetus behind the creation of theogonies was the desire to solve the problem of evil: 'it is not easy to avoid the appearance of making Him (God) susceptible of suffering.'² And it was precisely at this point that Boehme's theogony took its rise, for Boehme sought to describe God to creatures in order that God might be acquitted of being the author of evil.

Another romantic critic, whose aesthetics owe much to Boehme and Schelling, carried this problem of the mystical prerogatives further. The English poet, Coleridge, suggested

¹ Speeches on Religion, p. 49.

² Ibid., p. 49.

that Boehme's readers are well aware that the shoemaker mistakes
 the accidents and peculiarities of his over-wrought
 mind for realities and modes of thinking common to all
 minds. 1

He asks: to what extent are Boehme's speculations based upon
 experience, or to what extent are they fancy.² He suggests
 also that a second error is implied in the first, namely, that
 Boehme confused the active powers communicated to Nature
 with God.

Both problems are really the same -- the fundamental
 problem of all philosophy of religion: is Boehme's God
 also Coleridge's God? Is Boehme's God the God who created
 the universe? In the poet's peculiar view these problems are
 definitive of mysticism itself, for

When a man refers to inward feelings and experiences,
 of which mankind at large are not conscious, as evidence
 of the truth of any opinion -- such a man I call a mystic:
 and the grounding of any theory or belief on accidents
 and anomalies or individual sensations or fancies, and the
 use of peculiar terms invented or perverted from their
 ordinary significations, for the purpose of expressing those
 idiosyncrasies, I name mysticism. 3

Whether the poet who created Christabel and Kubla Khan has the
 right to question the 'inward feelings and experiences of which
 mankind at large are not conscious,' and label them, in derision
 mysticism, is an open question. But this does not solve the
 problem.

This is indeed the terrifying problem of symbolism. Many

1 Aids to reflection, Conclusion 2.

2 Cf. I. A. Richards, Coleridge on Imagination,

3 Aids to Reflection, Conclusion, 2, 2.

writers have maintained that the mystic is necessarily a
 symbolist.¹ The utterly transcendent God is beyond rational
 knowledge and the forms and patterns in which He is described,
 and in which His relationship to the world is explained, must
 be symbolic.² Symbolism and theogony are not only literary
 expedients adopted by men who have been struck dumb by the
 transcendent unknowability of God, but also logical necessities
 which follow directly from a certain conception of God. In
 this view God cannot be expressed nor even comprehended by
 finite forms and categories. As the old jingle has it:

Whatever your mind arrives at
 I tell you flat,
 God is not that!

Human language and human logic are both inadequate for an adequate
 expression of God's glory, and theologizing is therefore symbol-
 ically necessary.

In his theogony Jacob Boehme seeks to describe the origin
 of the Trinitarian God. In his seven natural principles he seeks
 to describe the emanation and the salvation of the world. His
 theogony seeks to explain the origin of existence -- an existence
 rooted in a unitary Source -- from a no-thing which possesses
 a definite relationship to the multiplicity of the universe.
 An antinomy here appears: this Source is a no-thing, and yet
 it is all; it is accessible to thought and yet irrational. This
 is the basic paradox of those speculative systems which seek

1 Underhill, Mysticism, p. 78ff, and Hughes, The Philosophical Basis of Mysticism, p. 56.

2 H. F. Dunbar, Symbolism in Medieval Thought and Its Consummation in the Divine Comedy, New Haven 1929.

to transcend themselves and to partake of 'pure' being, to be swallowed up in nothingness. Two roads seem possible: via positionis and via negationis. Two theologies result: apophatic and cataphic. The one seeks to coordinate and subordinate the way of affirmation to the way of negation. The other seeks to subordinate the way of negation to that of affirmation. If the Source is the 'All,' then by affirming and appropriating the manifold multiplicity of creation the 'All' may be reached. If the Source is a 'no-thing', then by negation and denial the Source can likewise be achieved.

Boehme's theogony, accepted on these provisional and symbolic bases, is sevenfold, and this sevenfoldness is obscure in origin.¹ Boehme's mind was restless and his system was always changing. It is difficult to catch a consistent cross section, to find a wholly logical picture of a coherent and orderly procession of ideas, such as is found in Spinoza's Ethica. Thus, the task of systematization is complicated. Yet in the Tabula appended to Epist xlvii, Boehme outlines the seven theogonic stages:

The first stage is the Ungrund, with its related descriptions, which is God 'outside of nature and creature.'

The second stage is the will of the Ungrund, the origin of all being, which is God the Father.

The third stage is the desire, the self-subjectivation of the will, which is God the Son.

The fourth stage is Movement, the outbreathing of the Logos, the self-objectivation, of God as Holy Spirit.

The fifth stage is the triune God conceived of in His unity as an image of willing, feeling, and thinking, or the Ingoing, the centripetal movement.

¹ Mysterium Magnum, i, 3, and passim. Boehme may derive these seven spirits from Revelation, i, 2.

The sixth stage is the Logos as the differentiating of reality into rational elements, of the comprehensibility of God, or the outgoing, centrifugal force.

The seventh stage is the divine wisdom, the Virgin Sophia, the corporeality of God, in which He becomes understandable, comprehensible, and capable of revelation.

Boehme again cautions his readers against considering this theogony as literal truth:

And I exhort the reader not to understand in an earthly manner the high supernatural meaning (when I speak of God and the generation of the great Mystery). Gnad. iii, 10).

In addition to the symbolic, mythological character of the Seven Spirits of God, they must also be viewed in a psychological sense, as descriptions 'according to a creaturely way and manner', because they reveal the logic of God-consciousness in man. If they do not actually describe God as he is, then they are at least descriptive of the way that man comes to a knowledge of God. Like all theogonies, Boehme's is myth, and like all myths, there is psychological truth in the story. Theogony may well describe the mystery of the Godhead, but it describes far more accurately man's coming to the knowledge of God. Outward and objective parallel inner and subjective. Inner is a sign and seal of the outer, and vice versa. In so far as Boehme's theogony is true, its truth rests upon this psychological character.

Boehme's whole burden is that God is no abstract, formal idea that can be toyed with, rationalized, and seized with the outward mind -- 'by selfish will and Reasoning' -- but He is to be perceived by the man who achieves unity within himself,

unity not only of reason, but also of will. (Myst. Mag., xli, 54.) Man is seized by God when he surrenders his will to Him and becomes a placid instrument of God's desire. (Sig. Rer., xv, 33.) Unless God seizes the resigned will all of man's opinions are external appearances, without real understanding and essential foundation.

There can be little doubt that Boehme's theogonic speculation was an attempt to explain the opening verses of the Gospel according to St. John. This is clear from the following:

When we contemplate the divine revelation in the whole world of creation, in all things, and consider the sacred writings, then we see, find*and understand the true ground. For it is said (John i, 1-3): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In this brief statement we have the whole ground of the divine and natural revelation in the being of all beings. For, 'in the beginning' means the eternal beginning in the will of the Unground for a ground, that is, for the divine apprehension, since the will apprehends itself in the Centre for a foundation, as for the Being of God, and brings itself into power, and goes out from the power in Spirit, and in the Spirit configures itself into a perceptibility of powers. Thus these powers, which are all contained on one power, are the primal being of the word. For the one will apprehends itself in the one power, wherein lies all hiddenness, and breathes itself forth through the power into an intuition, and this wisdom or intuition is the beginning of the eternal mind as the conspection of itself. This amounts to saying, The Word was in the beginning with God, and was God Himself. The will is the beginning and is called God the Father, and he apprehends himself in power, and is called the Son. And the being of the power is the scientia and cause of the speaking, as the essence or separation of the one power, and is the partition of the mind, which the Spirit by its out-going from the power renders divisible. Now there could be no utterance or sound (for the powers all lie in a single power in great stillness) if the one longing in the power did not

comprise itself in a desire, as in a scientia or drawing in. That is, the free longing comprises itself in a scientia of itself for a forming of the powers, that the powers may enter into a compaction in order to manifest soul. And therefrom arises the sensual tongue of the five senses as an inward beholding, feeling, hearing, smelling, and tasteing, which however must not be understood in a creaturely way, but only in the matter of the primal feeling and finding in a sensual way. And in this connection it is said: 'The Word (i.e. the formed power) was in the beginning with God.' For here two things are to be understood, namely, the unformed power. i. e. the In; and the formed power which is the with, for it has come into something and so to motion. The In is still, but the with is formed and compacted; and from this compaction and motion arise nature and creature, together with all being. (Gnad., ii, 7-11)

In this passage the theogonic stages are clear in their trinitarian relationships and the several stages are clearly defined.

1. First Spirit of God: God as Unknown

Boehme's basic designation of God -- the first of the seven spirits in his theogonic hierarchy -- is the unknown. Thus God is, in the first place, a 'hidden, unrevealed God' (Gnad., 11,20) or the hidden and the invisible (Mysterium Magnum, Preface,6)

This secret, hidden, unknowable God has a double significance. It means in the first place God's simple transcendence, His unrecognizability, His irrationality from man's point of view. This refers to the unification of all human antitheses in Him, to the irrational resolution of the disunities of man's experience. God is thus 'the dwelling of the unity' (Theos. Frag., 1,1). The hidden, transcendent God is unapprehended by anything (Mysterium Magnum, xxix,1). He is on the other side of good and evil, Jah and Nein, Freedom and Desire, without inclination or properties, and deeper than thought can penetrate. This He is meonic and pure being at the same time.

But this unknowableness of God has another meaning -- a meaning which goes beyond the simple transcendence of the Deity from the Creature's point of view. God in this stage as the Unknown is, in the second place, unknown to himself, insentient to Himself in that he has not yet won for Himself form and knowable, comprehensible being. He is not conscious of Himself.

God has made all things out of the nothing, and that same Nothing is Himself, viz. a love-desire; but now the love-desire would not be manifest, if it remains one in stillness without essence, and there would be no joy or moving therein, but an eternal stillness. (Sig. Rer., vi, 8.)

The Nothing is the highest good, for there is no turba therein, and so nothing can touch (or annoy) my soul; for I am a nothing to myself, but I am God's, who knows what I am; I know it not, neither shall know it... (Sig. Rer., ix, 59)

Further, we understand that God Himself is the seeing and finding of the Nothing. And it is therefore called a Nothing (though it is God Himself) because it is inconceivable and inexpressible. (Theos. Frag., ii, 13)

The Nichts may also be called Lord Sabaoth, who is outside of nature and creature, outside the Three Principles as they stand revealed in the free will. He is the eternal One God. (Irrth. Stief., 245).

The second word which Boehme uses to describe this idea of the Unknown God is his own significant creation; God in this first stage in his theogonic self-generation is the Ungrund, the abyss, the groundlessness, the Unconditioned. Western mysticism, particularly Meister Eckhardt, had spoken of an Abgrund, a godly abyss, but Boehme selects Ungrund in conscious antithesis to Grund. The Nichts struggles to become an Icht, the Ungrund a Grund.

The Ungrund is an eternal nothing, but makes an eternal beginning as a craving. For the nothing is a craving after something. But as there is nothing that can give anything, accordingly the craving itself is the giving of it, which is yet a nothing, or merely a desirous seeking. (ird. U. himml. Myst., 1).

In eternity, i. e., in the Ungrund out of nature, there is nothing but a stillness without being: there is nothing either that can give anything: it is an eternal rest which has no parallel, a groundlessness without beginning and end. Nor is there anything in which there were a possibility. This Ungrund is like an eye, for it is its own mirror. It has no essential principle, also neither light nor darkness, and is above all a magia. (Menschw., II, 1, 8).

All that can be said about the Ungrund is that a dark craving lives in it -- a craving that drives the ungrounded, or better still, the Unconditioned, towards a ground, i. e. towards nature and creature. This is the Urwille of the hidden God who struggles in darkness towards revelation of and knowledge of Himself.

For the nothing hungers after the something, and this hunger is the desire, viz., the first Verbum Fiat, or creating power: For the desire has nothing that it is able to conceive. It conceives only itself, that is, it coagulates itself, and draws itself to itself, and comprehends itself, and brings itself from abyss into abyss (vom Ungrunde in Grund).... so that nothing is filled, and yet remains a nothing; it is only a property, viz., a darkness. This is the eternal original of the darkness: for where there is a property there is already something; and the something is not as the nothing: it yields obscurity, unless something else, viz., a lustre fills it: and then it is light, and yet remains a darkness in the property. (Mysterium Magnum iii, 5)

If this Ungrund would no longer speak the Word then all Understanding, Reason, and Intellectuation would be impossible. Nature and Creature would not be. In the Ungrund there is an eternal begetting, an eternal breathing forth of the divine Word. All differentiation into forms and properties, all antitheses and dialectic, is founded upon this eternal breathing of the divine Word. In this all creaturehood originates. All things visible and invisible find their origin in the speaking of the Word.

(Taufe, I, 1, 1-7.)

The third description of the unknowability of God does not have a clear historical origin. God in His transcendence and His unknowability is an eye which sees in a mirror.

Seeing then the first will is an ungroundedness to be regarded as an eternal nothing, we recognize it to be like a mirror, wherein one sees his own image: like a life, and yet it is no life, but a figure of life and of the image belonging to life. Thus we recognize the eternal Unground out of nature to be like a mirror. For it is like an eye which sees, and yet conducts nothing in the seeing where-with it sees; for the seeing is without essence, though it is generated from essence, viz., from the essential life. We are able then to recognize that the eternal Unground out of nature is a will, like an eye wherein nature is hidden; like a hidden fire that burns not, which exists and also exists not. It is not a spirit but a form of spirit, like the reflection in the mirror, and yet there is nothing which the eye or the mirror sees; but its seeing is in itself, for there is nothing before it that were deeper there. It is like a mirror which is a container of the aspect of nature, and yet comprehends not in the mirror. And thus one is free from the other, and yet the mirror is truly the container of the image. It embraces the image, and yet is powerless in respect of the form, for it cannot retain it. For if the image depart from the mirror, the mirror is a clear brightness, and its brightness is a nothing; and yet all the form of nature is hidden therein as a nothing; and yet veritable is, yet not in essence. (Theos. Punkt 1, 7-10)

The fourth description of the Unknown God follows from the hints given in this passage: God is the All in unity. This originates in Scripture, for 'The Lord our God is one God, and there is none else'. (Exodus xx,2,3; Deut. xi,4.) Boehme uses this description, like the preceding one, in the work which he wrote near the end of his life, Theos, Frag. 1, 1.

God is the eternal unity, the immeasurable one good, which has nothing after nor before him that can give him or bring him anything, or that can move him; and is devoid of all tendencies and properties. He is without origin in

in time and in Himself one only, as a mere purity without attingence. He has nowhere a place or position, nor requires such for his dwelling; but is at the same time out of the world and in the world, and deeper than any thought can plunge. If the numbers of his greatness and depth should be uttered for a hundred thousand years together, his depth would not have begun to be expressed; for He is Infinitude. All that can be numbered and measured is natura; and figurate: but the unity of God cannot be expressed, for it is through everything at the same time. And it is therefore called Good because the eternal gentleness and the supreme beneficence exists in the sentiency of nature and creature as perceptible sweet love. (Theos. Frag. i, 1)

Thus, if God is 'through everything' then he is also hidden in nature and creature. And the fifth description of the hiddenness and the unknowableness of the Godhead in creature is the Mysterium, the great mystery. God, hidden and unknown in nature, is the great mystery. This description derives from alchemy:

For the mysterium magnum is nothing else than the hiddenness of the Deity, together with the being of all beings, from which one mysterium proceeds after another, and each mysterium is the mirror and the model of the other. And it is the great wonder of eternity, wherein all is included... But you must understand this according to the properties of the mirror, according to all the forms of nature, viz., according to light and darkness, according to comprehensibility, according to love and wrath, or according to fire and light, (Myst. Punkt, vi, 2-3)

Thus the Ungrund, or God the unknown, is hidden in all things.

The sixth description of the unknowable God is newly created by Boehme, although its roots lie deep in the folk soul: God is the 'eternal mind', das ewige Gemüth, or perhaps, 'The heart of God'. This conception of frankly anthropomorphic and it is designed to describe the inner Unity of the Godhead before his achievement of self-consciousness:

As we men upon earth rule over all things, that is, the whole sphere of intelligibility, through the distinction of words; so does God, as the eternal mind (Gemüth) of the one power, also work and rule through such image-like words. (Theos. Frag., xi,1)

As thinking, willing, and feeling are united in the central mind, or consciousness, of man, so the thinking, willing, and feeling of God are gathered up in his central heart, or mind, which is his groundlessness. This aspect of the Ungrund as eternal mind appears particularly in Boehme's earlier writings, especially in the Three Principles:

Therefore, if the eternal mind were not, out of which the eternal will goes forth, then there would be no God. But now therefore there is an eternal mind, which generates the eternal heart of God, and the eternal heart generates the Light, and the Light the virtue, and the virtue the Spirit, and this is Almighty God, which is one unchangeable will. For if the mind did no more generate the will, then the will would not also generate the heart and all would be a nothing. But seeing now that the mind thus generates the will, and the will the heart, and the Heart the Light, and the Light the virtue, and the Virtue the Spirit, therefore now the Spirit again generates the mind; for it has virtue and the virtue is the heart; and this is an indissoluble bond. (Princ., x,37)

Thus the whole or total God is being generated from the Eternal Mind:

Behold now, the mind is in the darkness and it conceives its will to be a light, to generate it; or else there would be no will, not yet any birth: This mind stands in anguish (Angst) and in a longing; and this longing is the will, and the will conceives the virtue, and the virtue fulfills the mind. Thus the Kingdom of God consists in the Virtue (or power), which is God the Father, and the Light makes the virtue long to be the will, that is God the Son, for in the virtue the Light is continually generated from eternity and in the light the Holy Ghost goes forth out of the virtue, which generates again in the dark mind the will of the eternal essence. (Princ., x,38)

Here in the Ungrund is the beginning of Boehme's dialectics.

In this Eternal Mind, or Ungrund, the first cadence of the theogonic process is aroused -- a cadence that leads to ultimate self-knowledge and self revelation. God is unknown from two points of view: unknown to Himself and plain unknown. Here the primitive dialectic of Boehme appears, for the first movement of the dark, hidden abyss is wave-like: there is first of all a tendency towards self-subjectivation, a sich-in-sich-selbst fassen, which ultimately leads to self-knowledge. And then there is secondly a tendency towards self-objectivation. A sich aus-sich-selbst-fassen,¹ which leads to self-projection and to self-revelation. Here is a contradiction. The Ungrund is an eternal no-thing which strives to be a something! This is impossible, for it cannot remain eternal and still be a something! Thus dialectic is potentially present in the Ungrund because the Urwille struggles to inject itself into actuality. The ewige Nichts seeks to become an Icht. The one is absolute desire in potentiality, for desire leads ultimately to self-knowledge; the other is absolute freedom in potentiality, for freedom leads to self-projection. Yet Freedom negates desire and desire negates freedom. Here begins Jacob Boehme's theology of dialectical existence, a theology ex idea vitae deducta:

Thus likewise, we are to consider the divine being, how the eternal understanding of the abyss introduces itself into the byss and essence, viz., into an eternal generation

¹ Cf. Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, p.8: 'Life then is to be conceived as an alternation between an abiding-in-self (Trickhalten) and a passing-beyond-self (aus-sich-hervortreten)'

and devoration, wherein the manifestation of the abyss consists, and is an eternal love-play; that the abyss does so wrestle, sport, and play with itself in its own conceived or amassed byss. It gives itself into something, and again takes the something into itself; and thence brings or gives forth another thing. It introduces itself into a lubet and desire; moreover, into power, strength, and virtue, and mutually produces one degree from the other, and through the other, that so it might be an eternal play and melody in itself.

(Myst. Mag.,v,3.)

2. Second Spirit of God -- God as Will

Now a great step takes place.

God the unknown, as has just been seen, is natureless, passionless, and creatureless, with no tendency towards anything for there is nothing to which he could tend. The Ungrund is undetermined, a 'Stille ohne Wesen', an eternal Rest without beginning or end. (Menschw., II,1,8) It is the sole existence, having nothing within itself capable of comprehending itself.

In this Ungrund there is

a nothing and the all, and (there) is a single will in which the world and the whole creation lies. In him all is alike eternal, without beginning, equal in weight, measure, and number. He is neither light, nor darkness, neither love nor wrath, but the eternal One. (Gnad. 1,3)

Yet within this Ungrund there lies a dark, unfathomable craving to be a something, and in so far as this dark craving exists it is the only conditioned or determined aspect of the Ungrund. This is a craving to introduce itself into something so that it can find, feel, know, and behold itself. (Sig. Rer., ii,8)

for in the nothing the will would not be manifest to itself, wherefore we know that the will seeks itself, and its seeking is a desire, (Begierde) and its finding is the essence of the desire, wherein the will finds itself. (Sig. Rer. ii,8)

This driving of the Ungrund leads to the second step, to the second Spirit of God: the eternal will, of God the Father. The dark craving of the Ungrund and the will which is God the Father are not the same, for the former is an unknown, unfathomable desire to know and to be. It is without essence

or being. (Being as Boehme comprehends it is that state where willing, feeling, knowing, loving can take place.) The primitive craving of the Ungrund is to be such a being as can will, feel, know, love as well as be willed, felt, known, and loved. Active and passive are both implied in the eternal desire of the Ungrund to know and reveal itself.

Here we remind the reader that God in Himself (so far as he is called God apart from nature and creature) has no more than one desire, which is to give and bring forth himself. (Gnad., i,18)

This eternal divine understanding is a free will, which has neither source nor cause, unapprehended by anything and a nothing to itself. (Mysterium Magnum, xxix,1) This eternal free will has a seeking desire for a something. (Seel. Frag. i,13) And the process of bringing forth itself, the finding of the something, is thus described:

In this Chaos the eternal nothing comprehends itself in an eye or eternal power of seeing, for the beholding, feeling, and finding of itself. In such case it cannot be said that God has two wills, one to evil, and the other to good. For in the unnatural, uncreaturely deity, there is nothing more than a single will, which is called also the One God; and he wills in Himself nothing more than just to seize and find Himself, go out from Himself, and with the outgoing bring himself into intuition; by which is understood the triad of the deity together with the mirror of his wisdom or the eye of his seeing. Therein are understood all powers, colours, wonders and beings, in the eternal (one) wisdom in equal weight and measure without properties, as a single ground of the Being of all beings. And a longing that is found in himself or a desire for somewhat, a longing for manifestation or discovery of properties. For if there were properties, there would have to be something to produce or cause the properties. But there is no cause of the divine power and of the divine longing of wisdom, save the one will, that is to say, the one God who brings Himself into a threefoldness as into an apprehensibility of himself. This apprehensibility

is the center, as the eternal apprehended One, and is called the heart or seat of the eternal will of God, in which the Ungrund possesses itself in a ground. And it is the one place of God, but with no partition or separation; moreover, immeasurable, without any form or parallel, for there is nothing before it to which it might be compared. This heart or center of the Ungrund is the eternal mind of the will, and yet has nothing before it that it can will, save only the one will that apprehends itself in this center. The first will to the center likewise has nothing that it can will, save only this one place of its self-discovery. The first will is therefore the father of its heart or the place of its discovery, and a possessor of what is found, viz., its only begotten will of Son. The unfathomable will, which is the Father and a beginning of all beings, generates itself within itself into a place of apprehensibility, or possesses the place; and the place is a ground and beginning of all beings, and possesses in its turn the unfathomable will, which is the Father of the beginning and so of the ground. (Gnad.,i,8)

Boehme insists that no man should seek to penetrate into the Ungrund and its unfathomable will because this cannot become the object of human investigation. All attempts to probe beyond the will which has made itself into a ground, i. e. God the Father, produce confusion. (Menschw.,II,vii,lff.)

That is to say, the first unoriginated single will, which is neither evil nor good, generates within itself the one eternal good as an apprehensible will...The second will is the first will's eternal feeling and finding, for the nothing finds in itself as a something. And the unfathomable will, i. e., the indiscoverable One, by its eternal discovery, goes forth, and brings itself into an eternal intuition of itself. (Gnad.,i,5.)

Thus does the mysterious, non-conscious Ungrund bring itself into self-conscious ground, or determination.

Here in the deeps of not-yet-being, in the untried and uncontested unity, potential dialectic exists, for the desire, which is a tendency towards self-subjectivation and thus towards self-knowledge, contradicts the eternal will, which, as

freedom, is a tendence towards self-objectivation, self-projection. These two principles Boehme calls the 'fire principle' and the 'light principle'. Fire consumes. Light illuminates. Yet here in not-yet-being struggle and tension, dialectic, have not yet arisen. All is unity. Antithesis have not yet come to be.

Knowledge of good and evil exists where the unfathomable will separates into fiery scienti, in which lies the natural and creaturely ground...(Gnad.,ii,37) For it cannot be said of God that he is this or that, evil or good, or that he has distinctions in himself. For he is in himself natureless, passionless, and creatureless. He has no tendency to anything, for there is nothing before him to which he could tend, neither evil nor good....There is no quality nor pain in him....(he) is a single will in which the world and the whole creation lies... He is neither light nor darkness, neither love nor wrath, but the Eternal One. (Gnad., i,3)

Knowledge of dualities comes only after the eternal will has emanated from itself and brought itself into comprehensibility and form. A gentle, harmonious 'love' exists, for the tensions of being (i. e., of creation and nature) have not yet come to be. Here in the Ungrund there is a potential dialectic between the fire and the light principle -- potential because being is not yet.

In a series of texts in Mysterium Pansophicum Boehme describes the nature of the eternal will by contrasting it with the dark desire, or craving, of the Ungrund:

The Ungrund is an eternal nothing, but makes an eternal beginning as a craving. (Sucht) For the nothing is a craving after something. But as there is nothing that can

give anything, according the craving itself is the giving of it, which yet also is a nothing, or only a desirous seeking. And that is the eternal origin of magic, which makes within itself where there is nothing, and that in itself only, though this craving is also a nothing, and there is nothing that can give it anything: neither has it any place where it can find or repose itself. (Myst. Pan., i.)

The will is an insensitive, incognitive life, born out of the potential tension in the Ungrund:

The will is the eternal omnipotence, for it has no parallel... we recognize.. the eternal will-spirit as God. (Myst. Pan., iii,1.3)

The dark desire of the Ungrund creates an eternal will which is God the Father in His omnipotence and His majesty:

This will is a spirit as a thought, which goes out of the craving, for it finds its mother or the craving (Begierde). Then is this will a magician in its mother. (Myst. Pan., ii,1)

The desire of the Ungrund is not the free, eternal will which is God the Father, for the Urwille is self-centered and desirous, while the eternal will is free.

Thus the craving is a Magia, and the will a Magus; and the will is greater than its mother which gives it; for it is Lord in the mother; and the mother is dumb: but the will is a life without origin. The craving is certainly a cause of the will, but (it is) without knowledge or understanding. The will is the understanding of the craving. (Myst. Pan., ii,2)

Thus the primitive desire of the Ungrund is not conscious of itself, for it is desire, yet without an object of its own desire. The eternal will, on the other hand,

Is free from the craving, but the craving is not free from the will (for the will rules over the craving)... the craving is indeed a movement or attraction or desire, but without understanding; it has a life but without knowledge. (Myst. Pan., iii,1)

The eternal free will is Lord and Master of the primitive desire, for the desire, by revealing itself and realizing itself through the will, becomes an entity in the life of the will -- then it knows what it is and does. (Myst. Pan.,iii,2)

Thus the will-spirit is an eternal knowing of the Ungrund, and the life of the craving an eternal body of the will. (Myst. Pan., iii,4) The will takes where there is nothing. It is Lord and possessor. It is itself not a being, and yet rules in being, and being makes it desirous, namely of being. (Myst. Pan.,iv,3)

Thus

God in so far as he is called God, can will nothing but Himself; for He has nothing before or after Him that he can will. But if He will anything, that very same has emanated from Him, and is a counterstroke of Himself, wherein the eternal will wills in its something. Now if the something were only one, the will would have no exercise therein. And therefore the unfathomable will has separated itself into beginnings and carried itself into being, that it might work in something, as we have similitude in the soul (Gemüth) of man. (Gottl, Beschau;; (i,19)

Yet the eternal will is without essence and thus the transcendence of God the Father is maintained. Had the eternal will essence it might be known by creature, and by the denial of essence to the free will the hidden majesty of God is maintained.

One way of describing the process of emanation from the dark craving of the Ungrund to an eternal free will to being is Boehme, says, as the eternal speaking of the Word. This metaphor leads him to create one of his most interesting theological categories -- his metaphysics of language. The obvious origin of this is the attempt to realize in rational terms the idea that that which is spoken is the Logos, and the eternal

speaking is the will of the transcendent God forming itself in the manifested word. This speaking of the Word is devoid of essence; it is not the Word. Essentiality means comprehensibility, and God is comprehensible only when the Word is spoken.

This metaphysics of language -- if it may be called that -- is developed in literal fashion, indeed, in an almost barbaric manner. Each letter in God's name signifies a particular virtue, or activity, in God. Thus the J or I is the effluence of the individual unity, or the sweet gracefulness of the ground of the divine power to become something. The E, being a threefold I, is shut up in the One, for the I becomes IE which, Boehme says, is an outbreathing of the Unity itself. H is the Word, or the breathing and speaking of the triune God. The O is the circumference, the Son of God. The V is the joyful effluence from the breathing, and that is, the proceeding Spirit of God. The A is that which is proceeded from the power and the virtue, that is, Wisdom. Together they spell JEHOVA. (Clavis, 33-39)

In the Ungrund, or center of eternal nature

the eternal speaking word brings itself into a generation and also makes itself... a speaking word. (Mysterium Magnum, ii,7).

This speaking is the free, eternal will of the Father, for

When we contemplate the divine revelation in the whole world of creation, in all things, and consider the sacred writings, then we see, find, and understand the true ground. For it is said (John i, 1-3): 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' (Gnad., ii,8)

That God was the Word, and that He spoke the Word is clear. Boehme derives this idea from those old Testament passages where God is described as speaking to man.

Thou shouldst not hink that God at that time (creation) did speak in the way that men do, and that is but a weak and impotent word... God's word, which He spoke then in power, hath encompassed heaven and earth, and the heavens of heavens, yea the whole Deity also... (Aurora, xviii, 104, 106)

The expression Verbum Domini is used by Boehme to describe the creative act. This is also the Verbum fiat, that word which creates where nothing had been. (Mysterium Magnum, iii, 8.)

The conception of the will, viz., of the Father, is from eternity to eternity, which conceives his speaking word from eternity to eternity, and speaks it forth from eternity to eternity. The speaking is the mouth of the will's manifestation; and the egress from the speaking or the generation is the spirit of the formed word. (Mysterium Magnum, vii, 10)

The formed Word which God speaks is, of course, Christ, but the process of speaking is of God the Father. Boehme contrasts the eternal speaking and the heavenly language of God with the halting, momentary verbiosity of man. Only the prophets are able to understand God's language. (Bedenk. Stief., 84) In ordinary men self-will prevents a full understanding of God's spoken word. (Bedenk. Stief., 87)

Boehme also designates the Eternal Will as the absolute freedom of the Godhead. This is the basis of Boehme's voluntarism. In the eternal stillness and rest of the Ungrund, beyond the tensions and disunities of creation, there is an eternally free will -- a drive to introduce the nothing into a something in order that the will may find, feel, and behold

itself. (Sig. Rer., ii,8) This eternal will is freedom. The dark craving that leads to desire is not free. Thus, even in the Ungrund freedom and necessity are present, although only potentially, for they are harmoniously blended:

The eternal divine understanding is a free will, not arisen from anything or by anything; it is its own peculiar seat, and swells only and alone in itself, unapprehended of anything; for beyond and without it is nothing, and that same Nothing is only One; and yet it is also a nothing to itself. It is one only will of the abyss, and it is neither near nor far off, neither high nor low; but it is an all, and yet is nothing. For there in itself is no contemplation, sensation, nor preceiving whereby it might find a likeness of itself. (Mysterium Magnum, xxix,1)

This eternal will corresponds to the first of the two great dialectical forces inherent in the Ungrund: the will to be, the sich-aus-sich-selbst-fassen, of self-projection. But This will must itself be conditioned by the 'tincturing' and appeasing Son, the eternally begotten of the Father.

3. Third Spirit of God -- God as Logos

Jacob Boehme's significant Christology divides itself into three distinct parts because he conceived of three different and independent modes of Christ. The first mode is the eternal birth of the Son of God, the Word that was from the beginning. The second mode is the birth of the Son as a heavenly being, of the Christ in Eternal nature. The third mode is the birth of the Jesus of History, the Son of Mary, the Incarnated Logos in human existence.¹ Only the first of these three modes of Christological speculation belongs to Jacob Boehme's theogonic series; the second is part of his cosmology; and the third, obviously enough, belongs to the fields of anthropology and soteriology.

This first Christological mode is the second tendency latent in the Ungrund, the tendency to draw the will in upon itself in self-subjection -- the yielding, propitiating, loving will which tinctures the harsh assertive will of the Father. As such it is the dialectical counterpart of the father's will, for if the All were but one, then the One certainly could not be revealed, for there would be nothing to which it might seek to reveal itself. (Mysterium Magnum, iv, 22.) The dialectical character of this theogonic generation is clear from the following:

1. Compare these with the three births in Tauler's first sermon for the festival of Christmas, ch Johann Tauler's Predigten, Berlin 1841, pp. 48-56. Tauler presents (1) The Birth of Christ from the Father; (2) The Birth of Jesus from Mary; (3) the Birth of Christ in a believer's heart.

The One, as the Yes, is pure power and life, and is the truth of God, or God Himself. He would in Himself be unknowable, and in Him would be no joy nor elevation, nor feeling, without the No. The No is the Counter-stroke of the Yes, or the Truth, in order that the Truth may be manifest and a something, in which there may be a Contrarium, in which the eternal love may be moving, feeling, willing, and such as can be loved. (Theos. Frag., iii,2).

The eternal process of begetting, imagining, seeing, mirroring (or whatever verb is used to describe the discovery of comprehensibility by the Incomprehensible, or the conditioning of the Unconditioned) results in that the eternal will discovers itself in comprehensible form.

The Father is the first will of the Ungrund; he is outside of nature and beginnings -- the will to something, which does not conceive itself into a lubet. (1) This lubet is the conceived power of the will, of the Father, and is His Son or Heart, and seat; the first eternal beginning in the will. And he is therefore called a Son, because he receives an eternal beginning in the will, with the will-self-conception. (Mysterium Magnum vii,6-7)

This is further described thus:

The first unoriginated single will, which is neither evil nor good, generates within itself the one eternal good as an apprehensible will, which is the Son of the unfathomable will, and yet co-eternal with the unoriginated will. This second will is the first will's eternal feeling and finding, for the nothing finds itself as a something. And the unfathomable will, i. e., the indiscoverable One, by its eternal discovery goes forth, and brings itself into an eternal intuition of itself. Thus the unfathomable will is called Eternal Father. And the will of that is found, grasped, and brought forth by the Ungrund is called his begotten, or only begotten Son, for it is the Ens of the Ungrund, whereby the Ungrund apprehends itself in a Ground. (Gnad., i,5-6)

1. Lubet is the word that the early English translators used for the German Lust.

word. Of this speaking he says

Now, since it is the Father that speaks it, and the Word which is spoken out of the center of the Father is the Son thereof; and seeing the Father in his center calls Himself a consuming fire, and yet the Son (His Word) is a light of love, humility, meekness, purity and holiness, and that the Father of the Word is so also called and acknowledged throughout the Holy Scriptures, therefore we should consider the source of the fire in the center of the Father, seeing the Father and the Word are One, and yet in two distinct forms; and that also the wrath and the anger, together with the abyss of hell stand in the center of the Father (Dreyfach, i, 40)

Here three figures of speech are used: the father-son figure, the speaker-word figure, and the fire-light figure. Boehme does not consider these figures ultimate, however. He was searching for the meaning behind the images, and neither generic theology nor Logos doctrine nor Lichtmetaphysic in themselves sufficed. For

the Father contains in him the eternal nature in his own essence, and the eternal will itself, and generates out of himself a second will, which in the first eternal will (which is the Father) opens the principle of light, in which the Father (with the eternal essences, in his eternal original will) becomes amiable, friendly, mild, pure and gentle; and so the Father is not the source of darkness; for the recomprehended will which goes forth out of the center, and dispells the darkness is his heart, and dwells in itself, and enlightens the Father, which is generated out of the eternal essences, and is rightly another person; for he dwells in the Father's essences in himself, and is the Light of the Father; and this Word (or will) has created all things. (Dreyfach i, 53)

The metaphor is immaterial. Boehme adds to the traditional trinitarian imagery his own powerfully realized conceptions of its significance. Indeed, sometimes he describes this begetting of the Son from the Father with a minimum of traditional language:

For God hath no beginning, and there is nothing sooner than he, but His Word has an unsearchable beginning in him, and an eternal unsearchable end; which yet is not called end rightly, but Person, viz., the heart of the Father; for it is generated in the eternal center, not as a form of the center, but as a sprout of another center out of the first eternal center. Therefore he is the Son of the First, and it is rightly the flame of love, and the glance of the Father in the eternal will, and the second mother of the genetrix. (Dreyfach iii,2-3)

God the Father, as the first person,

is the eternal will which is the cause of all being. This will is not being itself, but the cause of all being, and is free from being, for it is the Unground... In the process of desire the will impregnates itself from the eye of wisdom, which exists in coeternity with the will, without ground and beginning. This impregnation is the ground of the will and of the being of all beings, and is the will's Son, for the will perpetually begets this Son from eternity to eternity; for he is its heart or its word, as a sound or revelation of the Unground of the still eternity, and is the will's mouth or understanding. And he is justly called a person other than the Father, for he is the revelation of the Father, his ground and being; since a will is not a being, but the will's imagination makes being. (Menschw., II,11,4)

Indeed, Boehme's vision does transcend the possibilities of language, and his hopeless mixing of metaphors, his repeated and faltering use of imagery and figure of speech, attests to the inadequacy of language rather than to the lack of vision. Boehme was trying to communicate his deep insight into the nature of reality and nowhere is his difficulty of language more apparent than here.

Yet he resolutely plunges into an attempt to describe the nature of the third Spirit of God:

The Son is the first will's humility, and in his turn desires powerfully the Father's will, for without the Father he would be a nothing. And he is rightly called the Father's longing, or desire, for the manifestation of powers, viz., of the Father's taste, smell, feeling and seeing. (Gnad. i, 23.)

Thus there are two longings, or tendencies in this 'begetting' process: a will of the Father to be and a desire of the Son for the Father's Will. These are the outgoing and the ingoing, the fifth and sixth spirits of God:

The birth of the Son takes its original in the fire, and attains his personality and name in the kindling of the soft, white, and clear light, which is himself; and makes a pleasant smell, taste, and satisfaction in the Father, and is rightly the Father's heart, and another person, for he opens and produces the second principle in the Father. (Princ., iv, 59)

It has been noticed that the Ungrund is God unknown from two points of view: unknown to himself and to creature. Now in the Son the outgoing will is crystallized, but from the Son the ingoing will carries this image back again into the Father. Thus

Out of the eternal will from eternity goes forth the Word of God, with the sharp Fiat of the great might of God. (Princ. 14,82.)

The first eternal will is God the Father, and it is, to generate His Son viz., His word, not out of anything else but out of himself. (Dreyfach., 2,60)

This outgoing will, after it finds itself in the Son, or Word, returns back into the Ungrund or mystery incomprehensibility, propitiating the wrath, and creating the second of the three principles.

Now the meekness is the Son of God, which dwells in eternity and mitigates the wrath, and is therefore called the Son, because he is generated out of the Father's nature; and is called the Word of the Father... and is called a person, because he is a self-subsisting essence, which does not belong to the birth of nature, but is the life and understanding of nature; and is called the heart of the Father, because he is the virtue and power of the center of nature, and he is in nature, as the heart in the body, which gives strength and understanding to its members; and is called the light of God because the light

is kindled in him, and takes its original in him; and is called the glance (Blick) because, in the eternal still liberty, he makes a glance which takes its original out of the sharpness of eternal nature, as mentioned before. And he is called the love of the Father, because the first will of the Father, to the genetrix of nature, desires only his most beloved heart... and is called wonder, because he is the creator of all things, by whom all things, out of the center of the essences of the Father, are brought to light, and being. (Dreyfach., iv, 68)

The Son is a person other than the Father, for he is the Light-world, yet dwellssin the Father, and the Father begets him in his will. He is truly the Father's love, as well as wonder, counsel, and power, for the Father begets him in his imagination, in himself, and leads him forth through his own fire, through the Principle, through death, so that the Son makes and is in the Father another world or another principle than the fire-world in the darkness. (Menschw. II, iii, 11)

God the Father is in Himself the freedom out of nature, but makes himself by fire in nature. The nature of the fire is his property, though he is in himself the Ungrund, where there is no feeling of any pain. But he brings this desiring will into pain and draws for himself in the pain another will to go out from the pain again into the freedom beyond pain. This other will is his Son, which he begets out of his eternal one will from eternity, which he leads forth through fire, through the breaking of the source of death, is out of his fierce ferventness. It is his other will, viz., the Son of God the Father, which breaks down death as the stern dark source, which kindles fire and proceeds through the fire as a shine or luster of the fire... Therefore it can dwell in freedom. (Mensch., II, v, 7)

here at the depths of the generation of the Trinity those two tendencies discovered at the heart of the Ungrund have divided into two forces, depending upon the two purposes of the creation of the Son: self-knowledge and self-manifestation. The Son, as the instrument of the Father's self-knowledge, returns to the Father's mysterious hiddenness, propitiating His wrath, and bringing light into the darkness. The Son, as the principle of self-manifestation, is the source and center of

all being, the basis of creation and existence itself:

These found, generated, and produced powers, as the center of the beginnings of all beings, does the first will in the perceptibility of itself breathe forth from itself, from the one power which is its seat of Son, in manner as the Sun's rays shoot forth from the magical fire of the Sun, and reveal the Sun's power. Accordingly, this outgoing is a ray of the power of God, as a moving life of the Deity, in which the unfathomable will has brought itself into a ground, as into an assurgent power. (Gnad. I, 13)

5. Fourth Spirit of God: God as Spirit

The dialectics of Jah and Nein have produced a God of wrath and love, of hiddenness and manifestation, of chaos and of self-consciousness, but the God who has revealed Himself, the God who is known by a creature, has not yet come to be because there is as yet no creature to know him. The hidden God's incomprehensible will has striven towards comprehensibility -- and this in a twofold sense: towards self-knowledge and towards self-manifestation. Boehme's God is self-conscious, i. e., apprehended by himself, when the Third Spirit of God, or the Second Person of the Trinity, has come to be, (although certainly the seventh Spirit is needed for this process.) But it is still necessary, in order that this God become known, that He enter into an outgoing, an emanation, an efflux, and create the knower of the as yet unknown God. That is, God must create the instrument of his creativity, he must fashion the creature that is to know him. And the instrument of this creativity is the Holy Spirit:

The third diversity, of the Third person in the being of God, is the moving spirit, which exists for the rising up of the terror or crack, where life is generated, which now moves in all powers, and is the spirit of life; and the powers can no more comprehend him, or apprehend him, but he kindles the powers, and by his moving makes figures and images, and forms them according to that kind and manner as the wrestling birth stands in every place. (Aurora, xxiii, 25)

Boehme's God is a God who constantly brims over into creativity, for the eternal driving of the will of the Ungrund

towards a Grund necessarily creates in itself the eternal source of creativity. And the instrument of this creativity is the Holy Spirit:

Thus in like manner we acknowledge a third person in the Deity, which proceeds from the Father and the Son. For He is the Spirit of the mouth of God, and has not its original in nature, but is the spirit of the first will to nature; yet he gets his sharpness in nature; and therefore he is the former and framer in nature, as most powerful and omnipotent... he is the bringer forth, the conductor, and the director; also the destroyer of malice and wickedness, and the opener of the hidden mysteries; he existed in the Father from Eternity, without beginning; for the Father, without Him, would be only an eternal stillness, without essence. He is the essence of the will... out of which air arises, which goes forth from the fire; and as you see that the human life, and its understanding, consists in the air, and that air governs life; so you must understand us concerning the spirit of God, which is the out-going and flowing virtue of the Heart and Word of God.

Boehme here uses the significant analogy of air, or breath, which is also the first analogy of primitive minds.

God needs the Holy Spirit to fulfill the complete process of self-realization which is implied in the eternal will of the Ungrund which seeks to know and to manifest itself. And the Holy Spirit is indeed the instrument of that creativity, moving out over the Void, creating and sustaining, fashioning and forming the will of the unknown God. Spirit is the link between the known and the unknown, between the Source and the Eschaton, between Alpha and Omega. For the Holy Spirit is the work-master of the world (Werkmeister) in eternal birth (Aurora, xiii,77); he is the creator of everything (Dreyfach, viii,72); he is the fashioner and former of all of nature (Dreyfach, iv,77); he is the opener of divinity in nature (Dreyfach, iv,84); and he dwells, creaturely wise, in the soul of man

(Aurora, Vorrede, 88) where he is born of will (Menschw. II, x, 11) and is responsible for the original, essential spirit of man. The Holy Spirit is also the creative force driving man, by means of anxiety, towards the new birth (Menschw. I, x, 1); he leads man to repentance (Busse, i, 21), creating spiritual courage and leading him to humility and meekness. (Complex., 109) And in the end of time it will be the Holy Spirit that will move and fill the world, bringing it on the 'youngest' day into strict conformity with God's will. (Seel. Frag. xxx, 11, and xl, 70). In this manner does the Holy Spirit move out and make the hidden God known to a world of fallen men.

Boehme's figurative thought is clearly revealed in the many images and metaphors which he commandeers to describe this Holy Spirit. Especially in the fifth Chapter of Dreyfach. does he mix up the figures and images, although without losing the clarity and the vividness of his thought:

For a cross-birth keeps the center in Ternario Sancto, in the Holy number three, in the distinction of the Trinity, where the Deity is called Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, where the two Principles part, the holy and the wrathful; and here it is that the flash makes a cross and the heart of God is generated....out of this word the Father speak's forth his spirit, which spirit goes forth from the word, into the meekness of the word, and brings with him the glance of the Majesty... Thus we say that the Holy Ghost goes forth from the Father and the Son; But whither does he go? Into the substantiality, with the glance of the Majesty, wherein the Deity stands revealed. This gate is called by me... Ternarius Sanctus... where the three persons have revealed themselves. Now therefore we say rightly, the Son is the Word of the Father... Whither does he speak it? ...Behold ! The word is the heart, and sounds in the essences of the Father; and the Heart speaks it in the mouth of the Father, and in the mouth of the Father the Holy Spirit

comprehends it, in his center, and so goes with it forth,
from the Father and the Son, into substantiality.
(Dreyfach, v,35ff.)

The depth of this stands out clearly in spite of the anthropomorphic nature of Boehme's descriptions. He attributes to God an eye, a mouth, and breath. But these are figures: an eye sees, a mouth speaks, and breath moves. All these figures are related to functions, to processes; the eye sees the image, the mouth speaks the logos, and breath moves out to strike the ear that hears the word. This constant change of image, and this lack of purity of metaphor, may be baffling at first, but when once the central idea is grasped then his changing images become illuminating, like new variations of old themes: As Shakespeare said:

For all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again that which was already spent.

The work and character of the Spirit is, then, clear, for he is the instrumentality of God's creativity:

For the Father is the power and the Kingdom, and the Son is the light and the splendour of the Father, and the Holy Spirit is the moving or exit (Ausgang) out of the powers of the Father and of the Son, and forms, figures, and images all. As the air goes forth from the power of the Son and Stars, and moved in this world, and causes that all creatures are generated, and that the grass, herbs, trees spring and grow, and causes all whatsoever is in this world to be: So the Holy Ghost goes forth from the Father and Son, and moves or acts, forms or frames, and images all that is in this world. (Aurora, vii, 42,43)

This reference to air, and the analogy of the activity of the Holy Spirit to that of air in the natural world, is an interesting one. But Boehme uses a much more puzzling image, that of fire:

The Father's fire swallows up the gentle substance. viz. the water fountain of eternal life into itself; into the fire's own essence, and meekens and sweetens itself therewith. Here must the substantiality die as it were in the fire, for the fire swallows it up into itself and consumes it, and gives from the consumption a living, joyous spirit. This is the Holy Spirit; it proceeds thus from the Father and Son into the great wonders of the Holy Essence, and reveals them ever and eternally. (Menschw., II,v,18)

And the Holy Spirit is therefore called holy and a flame of love, because he is the emanating power from the Father and the Son, viz., the moving life in the first will of the Father, and in the second will of the Son, in His Power; and because he is a shaper, worker and leader in the emanated joy of the Father, and the Son in Wisdom. (Gnad., i,24.)

These found, generated, and produced powers, as the center of the beginnings of all beings, does the first will in the perceptibility of itself breathe forth from the one power which is its seat or Son, in manner as the Sun's rays shoot forth from the magical fire of the sun, and reveal the sun's power. Accordingly this outgoing ray is a ray of the power of God, as a moving life of the Deity, in which the unfathomable will has brought itself into a ground, as into an assurgent power. Such a power does the will to power breathe forth out of the power, and the outgoing is called the Spirit of God, and makes the third kind of working, as a life or movement in the power. (Gnad., i,13)

The Holy's Spirit's place in Boehme's dialectic is clear from the following:

The center of the love is the Yes as the fire-flaming breath. And it is called God's Word, or the breathing of the unity of God, the foundation of power. And in the efflux of the love-breathing is understood the true Holy Spirit, as the movement of the life of love. The angelic spirit as well as the soul's spirit is also understood in this efflux, in which God is manifest and dwells. (Theos. Frag., iii,21)

Thus does the Holy Spirit complete Boehme's doctrine of the Trinity. The three persons of the God now have been generated from the originally unconditioned and undetermined Ungrund. But in this process of 'eternal birth' Boehme dis-

cerned three other spirits which emerge from the generation, which have logical places in this process of generation, and he gives these spirits a place in his hierarchy.

6. Fifth Spirit of God--God as Tendency towards Unity

Boehme's fifth spirit of God in his theogony is the hypost~~ization~~^{ization} of the tendency of the Many to be encompassed by the one. (Tabel #47,5). Generally it corresponds to the centrip~~idal~~^{idal} spirit of Plotinus, the ἐπιτροπή¹, and it is the dialectical counterpart of the sixth spirit of the God-head.

The Ungrund is at the same time the all and the nothing. Thus is a contradiction, giving rise to dialectical forces. The Ungrund is 'in itself' but one, 'which is nothing and yet is everything'. (Gnad., i,4) This fifth spirit of God is the negating, self-appropriating, in-going which ends, from the creature's point of view, in a God who acts in his own interests, or a wrathful God. The will of the Ungrund thus moves out into divisibility, form, and to conditioned and determined being; and from this spoken, comprehended Word these return to the Ungrund, to the unity, in a 'Nay-saying', the negation of this same will. Boehme says in Theos. Frag.:

The reader is to know that in Yes and No all things consist... The One as the Yes is pure power and life, and is the truth of God or God Himself. He would in himself be unknowable, and in him would be no joy or elevation, nor feeling, without the No. The No is a counterstroke of the Yes or the truth, in order that the Truth may be manifest in a something, in which there may be a contrarium, in which the eternal love may be moving, feeling, willing and such as can be loved. (Theos. Frag., iii,)

1, Cf. E. Zeller, Die Philosophie der Griechen, III,2, (Leipzig 1881), p. 47ff.

The No, as the negating principle, leads the discovered Image, the Word, back to the Ungrund, and it is thus the dialectical counterpart of the Yes, the outgoing of the One into divisibility and form. This is clear from the following:

And yet it cannot be said that the Yes is separated from the No, and that they are two things side by side with each other. They are only one thing, but they separate themselves into two beginnings or principles, and make two centers, each of which works and wills itself. As day in relation to night, and night in relation to day, form two centers, and yet not separated, or separated only in will and desire. For they have two fires in themselves: (1) the day, as opening out the heat, and (2) the night, as shutting in the cold; and yet together there is but one fire, and neither would be manifest or operative without the other. For the cold is the root of the heat, and the heat is the cause of the cold being perceptible. Without these two, which are in perpetual conflict, all things would be a nothing, and would stand still without movement. The same is to be understood regarding the eternal unity of the divine power. If the eternal will did not itself emanate from itself and introduce itself into receivability, there would be no form nor distinction, but all powers would be but one power. Neither could there thus be any understanding, for the understanding arises in the differentiation of the manifold, where one property sees, proves, and wills the other. It is likewise the same with joy. But if receivability, which is not identical with nor wills with the one will. For the one will wills only the one good, which itself is; it wills only itself in similarity. But the emanated will wills dissimilarity, in order that it may be distinguished from similarity and be its own something, in order that there may be something in which the eternal seeing may see and feel. And from the special individual will arises the No, for it brings itself into ownness, that is, into receptivity of self. It desires to be a something, and does not make itself one with the unity. For the Unity is an emanating Yes, which stands ever thus in the breathing forth of itself, being insentient; for it has nothing in which it can feel itself save in the receptivity of the differing will, as in the No which is a counterstroke of the Yes, in which the Yes is revealed, and in which it has something that it can will. (Theos. Frag., iii,3-5)

Thus the Yes and the No are not wills, that is persons, but mere tendencies, drives:

And the No is therefore called a No, because it is a desire turned inwards, as shutting in to negativity. And the Yes is therefore called Yes, because it is an eternal efflux or outgoing and the ground of all beings, that is, truth only. For it has no No before it; but the No first arises in the emanated will of receivability. (Theos. Frag., iii, 10.)

This No, this abiding in self, this self-consciousness of the hidden God, is the source of His wrath, and this is the reason why the Lord is called by Scripture an angry, jealous God:

This emanated desiring will is intrabent, and comprehends itself in itself, and from it come forms and properties. The first property is sharpness, from which comes hardness, coldness, dryness and darkness. For what is drawn in overshadows itself and this is the true ground of temporal and eternal darkness. And the hardness and sharpness is the ground of sensibility. The second property is the movement of attraction, and is the cause of separation. The third property is true feeling, as between the hardness and the motion, in which the will feels itself; for it finds itself in a great sharpness, as a great anxiety (Angst) contrary to the unity, so to speak... And in accordance therewith God is called an angry, jealous God, and a consuming fire; not according to what he is in himself independent of all receivability, but in accordance with the eternal principle of fire. And in the Darkness is understood the foundation of hell, as an oblivion of the Good; which darkness of entirely concealed in the Light, like night in the day, as may be read in John i, 5. (Theos. Frag., iii, 11)

The No is the tendency that moves from divisibility towards the unity, longing for unity because it is not that unity.

The first property of the Indrawal is the No. It does not identify itself with the Yes or the unity. (Theos. Frag., iii, 14)

The wrath principle is the No that returns from the found and discovered and comprehended Son into the hiddenness of the unknown God. It is God's self-consciousness, his tendency to draw the manifold to himself and to judge it, to contemplate

It in terms of his own self-interest. It is his wrath, his own self-consciousness. In Beschau. Boehme suggests the Biblical basis for his idea of the IN and the OUT:

In John I, 11-13, it stands written: 'HE (Jesus Christ) came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them he gave power to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' The valuable ground of divine manifestation lies in these words -- the eternal IN and OUT. For they speak of how the hidden, divine, eternal WORD -- the divine mighty in unity --receded to its ownness Out into the manifested, natural, creaturely WORD, i. e., into human nature. (Iv,1)

But the IN is the tendency back to unity within the Godhead, for, in spite of God's manifestation in three persons, he still is one:

When you are told about three persons in the Deity, and about the divine will, know that the Lord Our God is one God only. (Gnad.,I,25)

If there is truth in the doctrine of the Trinity, if God is three persons, it still is also true that it is God -- a unity -- that has threefoldness. In trinity there is unity, and this is the basic presupposition of any doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, there must be a movement back towards the unity of the Godhead after He has manifested Himself in his threefoldness; and this movement back is the fifth spirit of God in Boehme's theogonic hierarchy.

7. Sixth Spirit of God--God as Tendency towards Diversity.

Boehme's sixth spirit of God is the movement of the unity towards diversity, the hypost¹ization of the tendency of the One to divide itself into three persons. (Tabell, 6) Generally it corresponds to the centrifugal force of Plotinus, the Πρόοδος,¹ and it is the dialectical counterpart of the fifth spirit of God. This is the affirming, out-going, 'loving' aspect of the will, associated with the rôle of the Holy Spirit, the movement from the dark and hidden abyss to the clear and luminous state of manifestation;

This outgoing is a ray of the power of God, as a moving life of the Deity, in which the unfathomable will has brought itself into a ground. (Gnad., i, 13)

This is the basic determination of the Ungrund, the striving of the Nichts to be an Icht, the will to be which is implied in the nature of God. Boehme posits two movements within the trinitarian formula: one from the Father to the Son to the Spirit and to creation; and the other from the created host to the unity of the Father.

And from this Holy fire has emanated the Yes, as a ray of the perceptible unity. This ray is the precious name Jesus, which had to redeem the poor soul from the wrath; and in assuming humanity, introduced itself into the soul, into the dissident central fire--wrath of God's anger, and kindled the soul again with the fire of love and united it with God... In God there is no anger, there is pure love alone. But the foundation, through which the love becomes mobile, is the fire of anger, though in God it is only a cause of joy and of power. On the otherhand, in the center of the wrath fire it is the

(1. Zeller, op. cit., p. 300ff.

greatest and most terrible darkness, pain and torment. These two (the Yes and the No) are in one another like day and night, where neither can take hold of the other, but one dwells in the other. And they make two eternal beginnings. The first beginning is called the Kingdom of God in Love. And the other Kingdom is called the kingdom of God's wrath, or the foundation of hell, wherein dwell the expelled spirits. The Foundation of the Kingdom God is pure Yes, as powers of the separable Word. And the foundation of the wrath of God is pure No, whence lies have their origin... This emanated holy fire, whence it was yet operative throughout the earth, was Paradise. And it is paradise still, but man has been expelled from it. (Theos. Frag., iii,6-7)

This Yes is the movement out to the manifestation in creatures, the course of which is the theme of creation and life itself.

8. The Seventh Spirit of God -- God as Wisdom

When Jacob Boehme created his doctrine of the Ungrund-- that dark, impetuous will which struggles to know and to manifest itself -- he finds that he also must create what in many ways is his most characteristic doctrine: the doctrine of the Heavenly Wisdom, or of the Virgin Sophia.

Wisdom is the receptacle in which the eternal will of God sees, seeks, and finds Himself. It is the dialectical counterpart of the Ungrund, and is sometimes known as the feminine part of the Godhead. The underlying dialectical character is clear from the following:

For a One has nothing in itself that it can will, unless it double itself that it may be a two: neither can it feel itself in oneness, but in twoness it feels itself. (Theos. Frag., iii, 6-7)

The One needs to double itself before comprehensibility, or perhaps consciousness, in the Son is possible. The eye must see its image in a mirror, projected against some sort of a background. Instead of having the One and non-being as poles of his emanatory movement Boehme creates the Ungrund and the Virgin Sophia as the two polarities between which the generation of the Trinitarian God, and the manifestation of the created world, takes place. The Ungrund first creates its counter-image, Gegenwurf, so that the dialectical process of self-knowledge and self-manifestation can take place

Heavenly Wisdom, or the Virgin Sophia, is the image of God because the spirit stands in an image, or else it

could not be known. (Seel. Frag., i, 205) In this image the will of the Ungrund knows itself and is at the same time capable of self-manifestation.

Sophia is God 's revelation, the body of God, the outflown word of divine power, knowledge and majesty. She is God's perceptibility and sensibility, in which the manifold, differentiated powers of the world are harmoniously contained without tension. She is the essential power of the love of God from which all things receive their spirit and potential existence. She is the core of the active love of God, God's throne of Grace in man, and the mediation between God and creature in which the imaginations of God and the soul are united. She is the beginning and end of the creature, a mirror in which the eternal will has seen a pre-view of all creation. She is the eternal genetrix, the mother of all things, of Christ and all reborn souls. She is also the bride of man's soul, Christ's heavenly flesh and blood in us.

According to the dialogue between the soul and Sophia in Busse man can unite with her in erotic union, and she is the only one of the theogenic spirits with which man can be so united. The Christ-union is one of eating and drinking, a sacramental in-dwelling.

It may perhaps be said that Sophia may only be another was of naming the Kingdom of God, at least, when the Kingdom is considered in terms of the Platonic ideal world,

Boehme doubtless found this idea in Scripture. From the Wisdom of Solomon and from Proverbs the doctrine of

Sophiology may be derived.

The Virgin Sophia, as the image of God, is without substance and she remains eternally uncreated and ungenerated. She is not a watered down image of the Deity, but one of full value and intensity. (Seel. Frag., 1,206)

Boehme uses many figures and images to describe the central act of God's self-contemplation. The Virgin Sophia is the image of God, (Dreyfach., v,41), the likeness of the Trinity (Dreyfach., v,41), the likeness of God (Dreyfach. v,41), a likeness according to the deity and eternity (Menschw. I,ix,7), a framing of the image of itself (Gnad., i,16), the pattern of the power and spirit of God (Tilk., 64.), and a figure in the mirror of the wisdom of God (Menschw., I, ix,6)

The most important designation of Wisdom is related to Boehme's view of the Ungrund as an eye that sees in a mirror. In the mirror of Wisdom God possesses the means by which he can come to self-consciousness. He sees himself projected against himself. The seer, the mirror, and the image are God. This dialectic is the central act of God's self-contemplation, the act of self-differentiation. He must create an antithetical image, a counter-stroke of himself, so that he can see himself. The two basic designations of Sophia are thus as a Gegunwurf and as a mirror:

So it is to be understood concerning the eternal wisdom of God, which resembles the eternal eye without essence. It is the Unground and yet sees all; all has been hidden in it from eternity, and therefrom it has its seeing. But it is not essential, as in a mirror the brightness is not essential... for no seeing is without spirit; neither any spirit is without seeing. And we understand thus, that seeing shines forth from the spirit, and is

its eye or mirror, wherein the will is revealed. For seeing makes a will, as the unground of the deep without number knows to find no ground nor limit; hence its mirror goes into itself and makes a ground in itself, that is a will. (Theos. Punkt., i, 11-12)

The mirror remains eternally a virgin without bringing forth, but the will becomes impregnant with the aspect of the mirror. For the will is Father... Thus the will's imagination, viz. the Father, draws the mirror's vision of form... into itself, and thus becomes pregnant with power and virtue. (Menschw., II, ii,2)

(The Father) reveals the Word in the Mirror of Wisdom, so that the Threefold nature of the Deity becomes manifest in Wisdom. (Menschw., II, 11,2)

She (Wisdom) could hear nothing if the spirit of God did not work in her, and therefore she is no genetrix, but a mirror of the Godhead. (II Tilke 67).

The second designation of Wisdom as Gegenwurf, counter-image, may be construed as the self-objectivation of the unknown God:

It cannot be said that by this a nature or creation is understood, but the eternal imaged existence of the divine word and will as the spirit of God has in such a counterstroke, in the powers of wisdom, sported with himself in such formation of similitude. (Beschau., 111,6)

The word Wisdom is the outflowing Word, as an objectivation of the divine knowledge and divine willing, as the essential power of the great love of God, out of which all things have their motivation and possibility. (Tab. Princ., 19)

Behind this designation of Wisdom as the Gegenwurf there lies a theory of knowledge. The first step towards self-knowledge is also the first step to existential dialectic because this first antithesis is within God. The image of God created by this act of self-projection becomes therefore the central principle of all knowledge, and in so far as creatures partake of this image they are able to know. In

this Gegenwurf God becomes himself and creates the possibility of self-realization and self-revelation. Wisdom is, furthermore, the instrument of activity through which he realizes and reveals his inner trinitarian life in the God-head, in the world, and in History. And she also becomes the medium of salvation and of mystical union.

Boehme's voluntarism comes to light in his designation of Wisdom as the discovered (das Gefundene). God is an incomprehensible will, with a tendency towards self-subjection and self-objectivation, but He has not yet limited and discovered his own trinitarian life. Within the form (Geatalt) of wisdom he discovers Himself:

Thus the unfathomable will is called eternal Father. And the will that is found, grasped, and brought forth by the Ungrund is called his begotten, or only begotten, Son; for it is the ens of the Unground when the Unground apprehends itself into a ground. And the outgoing of the unfathomable will through the apprehended Ens out of itself into a movement of life of the will, as the life of the Father and of the Son. And what is gone forth is joy, viz., the discovery of the eternal nothing, in which Father, Son, and spirit behold and find themselves, and and this is called God's Wisdom, or intuition. (Gnad., i,6)

The discovery of the dark hidden being of God is his birth as the living presentation of the formed image. If the begetting of the Son is the presentation and comprehension of his being in Himself, then Wisdom is the presentation of this hidden form in a visible image and in essential corporeality.

The eternal wisdom is the begotten being, as a mirror and ornament of the Holy Trinity, in which the Powers, colours, and virtues of God become revealed, and in which the spirit of God has seen all things from eternity. (Stief. ii,30)

When God discovers his own 'dark nature' he experiences his birth, as the living representation of the framed image

(Stief., ii,30). And in this sense Wisdom is that which has been produced from within (das Ausgebornene).

One of the most characteristic of the designations of Wisdom as the emanated (das Ausgeflossene). In the form of Wisdom the dark hidden life of the Ungrund first becomes visible, framed in a comprehensible form. Wisdom is therefore a receptacle, a matrix, in which the Word has become formed. But both Wisdom and the Word are parts of the Godhead. Wisdom is that 'I' into which the transcendent God-head forms and fashions himself.

Wisdom is also designated as the egressed (das Ausgegangene), the form in which the inner trinitarian life comprehends itself and presents itself in bodily form.

God is a mere will, which has nothing that it can will but itself, therefore the will is a mere love longing, that wills, as an outgoing of itself to its perceptibility. The will is the eternal father of the ground; and the perceptibility of the love is the eternal Son, which the will begets in itself as a perceptible power of love, and the outgoing of the perceptible lover that wills is the spirit of the divine life. The eternal unity is thus a threefold, immeasurable, and unoriginated life, which consists in a mere willing, in a seizing and finding of itself, and in an eternal outgoing of itself. And what has gone forth from the will, love, and life is the wisdom of God, that is the Divine intuition and joy of the unity of God, whereby the love eternally introduces itself into powers, colours, wonders and virtues.
(Theos. Frag., ii, 1ff)

Wisdom, furthermore, is that which has been exhaled (das Ausgehauchte), a characteristic defined in the figure that the word is that which is spoken, or breathed, for, if the Son is the hidden Word formed and fashioned in God, and if the Holy Spirit is the outgoing, or exhalation, of the Word, then Wisdom is the exhalation itself:

Now the will speaks itself forth by the conception out of itself, as an outbreathing or manifestation; and this egress from the will in the speaking or breathing is the spirit of the Deity, or the third person, as the ancients have called it. And that which is outbreathed is the wisdom, viz. the power of the colours and the virtue of the will, which it eternally conceives to a life's center or heart, for its habitation; and does again eternally speak it forth out of the conception, as from its own eternal form; and yet also eternally conceives or comprehends its for his heart's center. (Myst., Mag., vii,8,9.)¹

Allied to this designation of Wisdom is the description of it as the articulated (das Ausgesprochene). The mute God strives to frame Himself as Word; this framed or spoken Word is the Son; the articulation of the Word is the Holy Spirit; and the articulated in which the deus absconditus steps out of his silence into an expressible, hearable form is Wisdom. This designation of Wisdom as the articulated is used by Boehme many times, and its relationship to the 'speaking' of the Word is obvious.

Thus the conception of the will, viz., the Father, is from eternity to eternity, which conceives his speaking Word from eternity to eternity. The speaking is the mouth of the will's manifestation; and the egress from the generation is the spirit of the formed Word; and that which is spoken forth is the power, colours, and virtue of the Deity, viz., the wisdom. (Mysterium Magnum, vii,10)

This designation of wisdom as the articulated is the commonest of the expressions which Boehme uses for the idea of the generation of the Trinity:

Thus now the Father continually speaks the eternal Word, and so the Holy Ghost goes forth out of the speaking, and that which is spoken forth is the eternal Wisdom. (Princ., xxii,25)

¹ The reference in this passage to the ancients is an interesting clue to the fact that Boehme had obviously read some of the fathers.

Also:

The Son is the Father's Word, which the Father speaks... The Holy Spirit of the Father comprehends it, in his center, and goes forth with it into substantiality, where it stands with the glance of the Majesty in the substantiality, as a virgin of then Wisdom of God, in Ternario Sancto, that which is spoken forth is an image of the Holy Number Three. (Dreyfach., v, 40, 41.)

This reveals that Wisdom, as the image of God, is not conceived of by Boehme as abstract form, but as being and definite corporeality. Boehme's underlying idea is that spirit does not exist apart from corporeality. The Eternal Nichts seeks to become an Icht; the formless seeks form; a nothing wants to be a something. The One, impetuous, omnipotent God First becomes operative and creative in a form, i.e., in corporeality. Wisdom is the image of God, the body of God, but still she is no formal and abstract body. She is instead a living, personal, incarnated pattern in which the fullness of the divine transcendence seeks to manifest itself.

How does the Christian idea of Trinity fit into this scheme? Does Boehme teach quaternity? And the answer is that this three-in-one God lives a secretive, transcendent, unintelligible life within himself. And the form in which this life and working steps out towards man is Heavenly Wisdom. This aspect of the idea is variously expressed:

Wisdom is the body of God (II Tilke, 57); she is the chest or container of God (Kasten Gottes) (II Tilke, 67); she is the receptacle of God. (Menschw., II, 110)

Wisdom is not the pattern of any single person in the Trinity, but she is the body of the whole triune God.

For it (Wisdom) is not a genetrix, neither itself reveals anything...it is the house of the Holy Trinity, and the ornament of the divine angelic world. (Theos. Punkt., I,i,10)

In Clavis there is an interesting and consistent picture of the nature of Heavenly Wisdom:

The Holy Scripture says, The Wisdom is the breathing of the divine power, a ray and breath of the Almighty; it also says, God has made all things by his Wisdom; which we understand as follows: The Wisdom is the outflow Word of the divine power, virtue, knowledge, and holiness; a subject and resemblance of the infinite and unsearchable Unity; a substance wherein the Holy Ghost works, forms, and models; I mean, he forms and models the divine understanding in the wisdom; for the wisdom is the passive, and the spirit of God the active, or life in her, as the soul in the body. The wisdom is the great mystery of the divine nature; for in her the powers, colours, and virtues are made manifest; in her is the variation of the power and the virtue. viz., the understanding; she is the divine vision, wherein the unity is manifest. She is the true divine chaos wherein all things lie, viz., a divine imagination, in which the ideas of angels and souls have been seen from eternity, in a divine type and resemblance; yet not then as creatures, but in resemblance, as when a man beholds his face in a glass: therefore the angelical and human idea did flow forth from the wisdom, and was formed into an image; that is, he created the body and breathed into it the breath of the divine effluence, of divine knowledge, from all the three principles of the divine understanding. (Clavis., 19ff) 1.

On the basis of this significant quotation, Wisdom, in her aspect of the corporeality of the triune God, is also the principle of intelligibility in God. That God's being is spirit is evident from the exposition of Wisdom according to her co-activity with the several persons of the Trinity in Creation and History. She is the spirit's corporeality:

For she is the substantiality of the spirit, which the spirit of God puts on as a garment, whereby he manifests Himself, else his form would not be known. For

1 The Scriptural passage here referred to is the last part of Chapter VII of The Wisdom of Solomon.

is the Spirit's corporeality and though she is not a corporeal, palpable substance, like us men, yet she is substantial and visible; but the spirit is not substantial. For we men can, in eternity, see no more of the Spirit of God, but only at a glance of the Majesty; and His glorious power we feel in us, for it is our life, and conducts us. But we know the Virgin in all her heavenly similitudes or images; whereas she gives a body to all fruits, she is not the corporeity of the fruits, but the ornaments or luster. (Dreyfach., v,50-52)

The Spirit's substantiality is also corporeality, intelligible in a living and personal form:

And this is called Virgin Wisdom; for it is not a genetrix, neither reveals anything; but the Holy Spirit is the revealer of its wonders. It is his vesture and fair adornment, and has in it the wonders, colours, and virtues of the divine world; it is the house of the Holy Trinity, and the ornament of the divine and angelic world. (Theos. Punkt., I,i,62)

Thus heavenly wisdom is the Kingdom of forms by which the activity of the Spirit creates living things. She is the world of ideas, but a world far more significant than the Λόγος of Plotinus. The emanationary movement of the Plotinian system from the One through the Λόγος to the psyche and finally to non-being was not dialectical. And the God involved was not a personal one. Plotinian metaphysics safeguarded theism at the high price of forsaking the idea of a self-conscious God. But Boehme's conception of Heavenly Wisdom was introduced in order that God might become a self-conscious being who was active in his created world.

9. The Theological Problem

Thus did Jacob Boehme speculate about the mysteries of the Godhead.

His conception of God's generation sought to maintain the active, personal, considerate God of his own religious experience. Against the narrow Thomistic doctrine that all that can be known about God is that He is,¹ Boehme raised this interesting speculation about the generation of the Godhead, the origin of the Trinity, God's self-consciousness and the means of His self-manifestation.

Several basic ideas dominate his thought: in the first place the idea of sevenfoldness is a Biblical idea, deriving from the idea of the seven spirits of God before the throne of God in Revelation i,4; Secondly, Boehme elevates the Platonic ideal world to a place in his mystical theogonic seven in that he makes the Virgin Sophia the dialectical aspect of the Ungrund. Thirdly, the deep overtones of Luther's two modes of God -- his deus absconditus and his deus revelatus -- are clearly evident.

Boehme's doctrine of God raises several logical problems because in seeking to maintain his full comprehension Boehme was forced to admit to his sacred seven three logically different, although perhaps ultimately related, questions. The first problem is the problem of the divine being as such, involving the problem of the generation of a trinitarian God from

1. ref.

a primitive unity -- the problem of theogony. The second problem is that of the relationship of this trinitarian God to the created world -- the problem of theodicy. And the third problem is the general problem of life conceived of as the interplay of Jah and Nein -- the problem of dialectics. In elevating these three logically different problems to the same plane Boehme is asserting that there is some sort of relationship between them, and that the three persons of the Holy Trinity, not merely the Son, are related to the Virgin Sophia, to the Kingdom of forms and patterns out of which all things are made.

The first problem is that of the generation of the Trinity. This is the old Christian problem and Boehme has little new to add. For of the seven spirits are here included: the Ungrund, the eternal will, the Spoken Logos, and the Spirit. Logically considered, only three spirits are necessary for the Ungrund might be combined with the first person of the Trinity.

The second problem is of the creation of the world: how is the world made? Here the last of the seven Spirits of God is introduced, the Virgin Sophia. This is the old problem of the archetypes of finite beings, the Platonic problem of the world of forms. Sophia is the divine world, the ousia, of God from which the world came to be.

The third problem is the problem of life, and it involves the fifth and sixth spirits of Boehme's theogony. Its logical

nature is dialectical, for it consists in the insight that life, even divine life, is constituted by a continual interplay of Jah and Nein.

Why did Boehme combine these three different logical levels into one doctrine of God, implying that there is some sort of relationship between them? Is it possible that these problems -- none of them new with Boehme -- were considered in a new relationship and that the shoemaker's real gnosis, his real mystical insight, was concerned with the relationship of these problems?

The doctrine of the Trinity consists of two postulates, both of which are essential to a full understanding of the Christian idea of God: first, that in the unity of God there is trinity, and secondly, that in the trinity of God there is unity. Father, Son, Spirit -- three persons - have one substance. Sophia is the doctrinal explanation of the idea of consubstantiality in the Holy Trinity, and as such Sophia is distinct from the Hypostases, although she cannot exist apart from them. Sophia belongs to the Hypostasis, is included in the hypostatic being, and is related to each one of the Hypostases.

There is a curious prejudice which holds that Sophia can be associated only with the Son, an association that almost amounts to identification. But this is unitarian, and is obviously absurd, incompatible with the Trinitarian principle. In so far as Sophia is a counterpart of the Ousía, she is akin to the whole of the Trinity, to all three Hypostases,

both as separate persons and in their mutual association.

This all becomes clear when it is realized that Boehme's fundamental insight, his dialectical view that all things are constituted by Yes and No, applies to God too and in a double sense. Not only is there dialectic within the Persons of the Trinity, but also between the Trinity conceived in its totality and the Sophia principle. The dark Ungrund is dialectically related to the 'light' Son; but so also the whole active Trinity is related in a dialectical fashion to the passive, 'feminine' Sophia. The Trinity is the active, generative, creating God.

Sophia's relation to the Father is one of revelation. Sophia enables Him to come to self-knowledge, to self-consciousness disclosing to Him the undisclosed depths of His nature. It is important to realize that in His hypostatic being the Logos both is and is not this Sophia. Sophia does not exist apart from her connection with the Logos, without being hypost~~at~~ized in Him, and conversely, the Logos does not exist apart from his connection with Sophia. But the Logos in Himself is hypostatic Wisdom as such -- -- but the bearing of this statement dare not be restricted, for it can only be true in the affirmative. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from Wisdom, for, in conjunction with the Son, the Spirit possesses and reveals her. She is the ousia with which the Spirit works. Thus the relation of Sophia to the second and third persons of the Trinity is immediate, in so far as she expresses the image of the hypostatic being of each, while

the relation of Sophia to the Father is mediated through the relation of Sophia to the other hypostases, who disclose Him to Sophia.

Thus the dialectical basis of Boehme's theogony, of his idea of God, is constructed with a view towards maintaining his two most precious attributes of God: God's personalish and his theistic concern for the world. The antinomies of Boehme's doctrine of God resulted from his desire to maintain both attributes. His 'Dialectical God' resulted, for the deus absconditus and the deus revelatus are really not two Gods, nor even two modes of God, for from the creature's point of view all that is known of God is already revealed. But God's wrath, Boehme believed, is the product of the nay-saying, of the self-consciousness, of His self-interest.


Here is the deeps of Boehme's solution to the problem of evil -- his stimulus to speculative realization of the contradictions of his experience. Evil is related to self-consciousness to the nay-saying, to the wrath, to the mystery. All of his dialectical speculation, his extensive solution to the problem of theodicy, is rooted in his distinction between the God in self-contemplation, and the God in action. God's relation to the world is through the generated Trinity; but His own self-consciousness is without that Trinity. Here the two cadences of His God appear, the active and the passive; and evil is the rebellion of the self-centered activity against the passive, yet unyielding power of the self-contemplating God.

II. ETERNAL NATURE

1. Introductory: Sophia and the World of Ideas

Heavenly Wisdom is the central figure of God's self-revelation and self-manifestation in a threefold sense: first, the revelation of Himself to Himself, or His attainment of self-consciousness; secondly, the revelation of Himself in creation, or self-manifestation; and thirdly, the revelation of His unity and fullness to a spiritual creature, or revelation in the ordinary sense. The first activity is theogonic; the second is theodocial; and the third is cognitive and redemptive.

The second of these functions is the rôle that Sophia plays in the creation of the universe. She is in this sense God's body, for God is a living being in every sense of the term, having both body and organic life. By giving this sort of corporeality to God Boehme avoids the pitfalls of pantheism. To escape pantheism, which claims that the world is God's body

(which in turn implies the eternity of the world and makes God responsible for evil), it is necessary to give God a 'body' all his own. Only at this price -- the price of idealism -- can pantheism be avoided and God and the world not confused. For a God who possesses a body of His own and whose life is His own proper internal life -- his private life, so to speak -- is certainly not the world, but is instead a transcendent being, a mystery. Here the opposite danger of deism appears, for to shut God off from His creation in His impenetrable transcendence is to limit God and to break His internal unity. Only an organic, dynamic, creating Being can be the God of the universe; He engenders it; He sustains it; He moves it. Here, then, is the problem: How can God be the sustainer of the world without being the originator of evil? And the answer, logically necessary, is some sort of doctrine of divine nature, the philosophy known as panentheism --  _____. And the role that Jacob Boehme ascribes to his Virgin Sophia is the body of God.

Boehme's conception of Heavenly Wisdom as the instrument - ality of God's self-manifestation is the basic doctrine in his solution to the problem of the relationship of God to creation. Sophia is often called the 'revealeress' (Die Offenbarerin) (Menschw. I, i, 12; Irrth. Stief., 253; ibid., 251) She is also known as the 'revelation of the unity of God' (Taf. Punckt., 19) as the revelation of life (Menschw., II, i, 10) as the Unknown God's desire of revelation (Gnad., i, 9), and as His

desire of self-manifestation. (Mysterium Magnum, vii,6)

Her function as the revealeress is variously described. In her the trinitarian essence of the Godhead is made clear (Menschw., II, ii,3) -- a theogonic act. Her will is to open up the wonders of God (Princ., iv, 88). Through her these wonders of God are brought to the light of day. She opens up the wonders of the divine element (Princ., xxii,26). She places a light in the dark deeps of the Godhead (Dreyfach., xi,15). She is the figure in which the wonders of God are known. (Dreyfach.,xi,13). She reveals, not only the true heaven of heavens, but also the great wonders of the Godhead. (Princ., xxi,71). Through her the Ungrund is presented in all its mysterious wonder. (Menschw., II,v,50) In her the Father reveals Himself through His speaking word. (Gnad., iii, 29)

In all these different functions the Wisdom of God is brought to some sort of expression. It is obvious that Boehme thought of Wisdom in female terms, thus giving his doctrine of God an androgyne character, and allowing the suspicions of the orthodox to be justified. Sophia is the female principle in the Godhead in that she is the passive element which brings what the will seeks into existence. Thus God 's own self-realization is procreative of being in this matric of Divine Wisdom.

The boldest presentation of this idea is in Tilk II. where Boehme described the relationship of the Will to Wisdom in erotic terms:

The Wisdom is the Bride, and the Children of Christ are in the Wisdom also God's bride. (II Tilk., 73.)

He says further:

I am not the Genetrix in the knowing, but my spirit is his wife as woman, in which he generates the Knowing, according to the measure, how he will. As the Eternal Wisdom is the body of God, and he generates therein what He will; then now if He generates, it is not that I do it, but he in me, I am as dead in the generating of the knowledge and he is my life. (II. Tilk, 74-75)

This 'I' is Boehme talking from out of his own experience.

The idea is further expounded in Princ.;

For the Deity is incomprehensible, and invisible, yet perceptible; but the virgin is visible like a pure spirit, and the Element is her body, which is called Ternarius Sanctus, the Holy Earth; and into this Ternarium Sanctum the invisible Deity is entered, that she may be an eternal espousal (or union); so that the Deity is in the pure element and the element is in the Deity; for God and the Ternarius Sanctus are become one thing, not in spirit, but in substance, as body and soul. And as the soul is above the body, so also God is above the Holy Ternary. (Princ., xxii, 72-73)

From this the almost innumerable passages in which Sophia is called the 'bride' and 'playmate' of God become understandable.

This is now God's companion to the honour and joy of God. (Princ., xxii, 86)

Other important descriptive words, ideas, and images are used; in fact, it is at this point that the basic Boehme distinction between desire and freedom arises. The Father's love for Wisdom, that is, for Himself, is His desire, which leads to His self-realization, to comprehensibility, and to the ultimate embracing of that form (Gnad., i, 9)

The egressed is called the lubet (Desire) of the Deity, or heavenly wisdom, which is the eternal original of all colours, powers, and virtues; by which the threefold spirit comes into this lubet, namely to a desiring, namely

of the powers, colours, virtues, and its desiring is an impression, a conceiving of itself. (Mysterium Magnum I,6)

Wisdom is thus the suffering, feminine, maternal, generating aspect in which the representation, revelation, and procreation of the Deity is brought to perfection. Thus Sophia is the eternal mother, the genetrix of all things:

For we see indeed that all things spring out of the eternal mother: and as she is in her own birth, so she has generated this world, and so every living creature is generated. And as that mother is in ~~her~~ springing forth in multiplication, when every fountain has another center in it from the genetrix, and a separation (or distinction) but undivided and not sundered, so also this world is generated out of the eternal mother, which now is such another genetrix. (Princ., vi, 2)

In the first matrix God moves Himself to creation. (Princ., vi,24)

In this act of self-representation and self-realization of God there is as yet no distinction, or breaking, of the unity. It has not led to opposition, but only to an inner act of self knowledge. There is no strife nor tension. All is love-play, harmony. Sophia is thus still 'virgin', a title which Boehme repeats hundreds of times. This 'virginity' simply means that the opposition between the active and the passive principle in the Godhead has not yet produced that dialectical tension necessary for the life of the creature. There is opposition, yes, but no productive tension. Sophia is still a 'mirror', reflecting God's image:

She is a virgin and never generates anything, neither takes anything into her; her inclination stands in the Holy Spirit, which goes forth from God, and attracts nothing to Him, but moves before God. (Princ., xiv,87.)

Again:

She is therefore called Virgin, because she is so chaste, and generates nothing; yet as the flaming spirit in man's body generates nothing; but opens all secrecies and the body is that which generates, so also here, the Wisdom or the eternal Virgin of God opens all the great wonders of the Holy Element. (Princ., xxii,21)

This conception of Wisdom as a mirror clarifies her original character. She bears nothing, but in her the Image is born without a 'separation'. She is God's image, His Wisdom, in which He glimpses Himself as Spirit, and ever and eternally opens His wonders in Her -- the more He opens the more He finds therein. (Menschw., I, ii,12)

And in this mirror ... the essence of the three principles, according to the likeness of the holy triad, has been seen as an unfathomable deep, and that from eternity. (Theos. Punkt., I, i,24)

Implied in the view that Sophia 'bears' the three principles is Boehme's vitalism. Like his age, Boehme was thoroughly vitalistic, for he believed that since the world contained living beings it was necessary that these creatures partake of a center of life -- a life which is the common source and which alone explains their existence as living beings. Yet, when once the profound analogy between organic structure in general and universal structure is seen, then one must posit a dynamic living center which itself explains all of life. This center may be called by many names: nature, world-soul, world-spirit, Archaeus, Separator. Plato called it the demiurgos. One becomes separated into many; the patterns and forms of individualities thus arise.

When the fundamental, irreducible character of life is admitted, then a centrum vitae arises and dangerous possi-

bilities appear. It is easy to identify this Anima Mundi, this Spiritus Mundi with God. In this case the world is not creature, but God's body. To avoid this pantheism the centrum vitae must be separated from the Divine Being, allowing the world to come from God and yet to be separated from Him. God is a spiritual being; the world is not wholly spiritual. Neither is the world the Gegenwurf of God. The rôle that Boehme gives to Sophia is of the Gegenwurf of both God and the world. The structural similarity of God and man and God and the world is mediated by Sophia.

This is all implicit in Boehme's anthromorphic and cosmological symbolism, of his notion of the similarity between macrocosm and microcosm. The androgyne Godhead corresponds to androgyne humanity. In Adam the heavenly Eve was formed as a Virgin, as body and soul; this is clear from a great passage in Menschw.

We recognize that the eternal beginning in the Unground is in itself an eternal will, whose origin no creature shall know. But it has been given us to know and to recognize in spirit its ground, which it makes in itself, in which it rests. For a will is thin like a nonentity; therefore it is desireful and wishes to be a something, that it may be manifest in itself. For the nothing causalizes the will so that it becomes desireful, and the process of desire is a mode of imagination, as the will beholds itself in the mirror of wisdom. Accordingly it imagines itself from the Unground into itself, and makes itself in the imagination a ground in itself, and makes itself pregnant with imagination through wisdom, i. e., through the virgin mirror, which is a mother without bringing forth, without will. The impregnation does not take place in the mirror, but in the will, in the imagination of the will. The mirror remains eternally a virgin without bringing forth, but the will becomes impregnate with the aspect of the mirror. For the will is Father, and the impregnation

in the Father, i. e., in the will, is heart or Son, for it is the will's or Father's ground, as the spirit of the will lies in the ground, and proceeds from the will in the ground into Virgin Wisdom. Thus the will's imagination, viz. the Father, draws the mirrors vision or form, that is, the wonders of power, colours, and virtue, into itself, and thus becomes pregnant with the splendour of wisdom, with power and virtue. This is the heart of the will of the Father, as the unfathomable will obtains a ground in itself by and in the eternal unfathomable imagination. We recognize then the impregnation of the Father to be the centre of the spirit of eternity, where the eternal spirit always seizes itself. For the will is the beginning, and motion or drawing-in for imagination, as for the mirror of wisdom, is the eternal unfathomable spirit. This arises in the will and seizes itself in the center of the heart, in the power of wisdom as drawn in, and is the heart's life and spirit. Since then the eternal, unfathomable will in itself were dumb, what is seized through (in) wisdom (which is called heart or center) is the will's word, for it is the sound or power, and is the will's mouth which reveals the will. For the will, viz. the Father, with the movement of the Spirit speaks forth power into the mirror of wisdom... And with the speaking forth the spirit proceeds from the will, from the word of the mouth of God, from the center of the heart, into what is spoken forth, viz. into the virgin mirror, and reveals the Word of life in the mirror of wisdom, so that the threefold nature of the Deity becomes manifest in Wisdom. Thus, we recognize an eternal unfathomable, divine essence, and in its nature three persons, whereof one is not the other. (II, ii, 1-4)

These images describe but they do not expound the function of Wisdom as 'Revealeress'. This exposition lies in Boehme's whole view of the dialectical structure of reality, in his metaphysics of opposition (Realdialectik). This is the heart of Boehme's speculative system because it consists in the fundamental insight which his mystical experience yielded him: in Jah und Nein bestehen alle Dinge. Revelation perfects itself not by the self-sufficiency of the One, who contemplates the no-thing, but in the fact that the One leads itself into an opposition, into a separation. First the matrix Wisdom creates a fruitful realization of the inner life of God; the

unity of life realizes itself in the multiplicity of life, the unity of knowledge in the multiplicity of knowledge, the unity of will in the multiplicity of wills. Wisdom, as the antithesis, the counter-image and self-delineation of God, is the beginning of all separation. This dialectical relationship makes possible the fruitful realization of God in single forms. Wisdom is called the revealeress because she is the first principle of differentiation in which God glimpses the varieties of His own being. In her the contemplation of His unity is brought to its perfection.

This is clearly explained in Gottl. Beschau.

This image is the *Mysterium Magnum*, viz. the creator of all beings and creatures; for it is the separator in the efflux of the will, which makes the will of the eternal one separable; it is the separability of the will, from which powers and qualities arise. (Gottls. Beschau. iii,5)

From this separation there follows the further unfolding of the One, of the Unity, into ever-new separations:

These powers are an efflux of themselves, each power bringing itself into individual will according to the virtue of the same power. From thence arises the multiplicity of wills, and from this also the creaturely life of eternity has taken its origin, viz. angels and souls. And yet it cannot be said that by this a nature of creation is understood, but the eternal imaged existence of the divine word and will, as the Spirit of God has in such a counterstroke, in the powers of wisdom, sported with himself in such formation of similitude. As the mind of man in the understanding introduces itself by the senses into a counterstroke of exact likeness, and by sense flows forth and disposes into images, which images are the thoughts of the mind, wherein the will of the mind works, and thus by desire brings itself into sharpness, as into a magnetic appropriation, from which joy and sorrow arises; so also, in regard to the eternal mind of perceptibility, we are to understand that the outgoing of the one will of God has, through the Word, introduced itself into separability, and the separation has introduced itself

into receptibility, as into a desire and craving for its self-revelation, passing out of the unity into plurality. Desire is the ground and beginning of the nature of the perceptibility of the particular will. For therein is the separability of the unity brought into perceptibility of self-hood, wherein the true, creaturely, perceptible, angelic, and soullic life is understood. For the will of the eternal one is imperceptible, without tendency towards anything; for it has nothing to which it could tend, save only towards itself. Therefore it brings itself out of itself, and carries the efflux of its unity into plurality, and into assumption of selfhood, as of a place in nature, from which qualities take their rise. For every quality has its own separator and maker within it, and is in itself entire, according to the quality of the eternal unity. Thus the separator of each will develops in its turn qualities from itself, from which the infinite plurality arises, and through which the eternal One makes itself perceptible, not according to the unity, but according to the efflux of unity. But the efflux is carried to the greatest sharpness with magnetic receptivity, to the nature of fire; in which fiery nature the eternal One becomes majestic and light. Thereby the eternal power becomes desireful and effectual, and is the original condition of the sensitive life, where the Word of power, in the efflux, an eternal sensitive life has its origin. For if the life had no sensitiveness, it would have no will nor efficacy; but pain makes it effectual and capable of will. And the light of such kindling through fire makes it joyous, for it is an annointment of painfulness. (Beschau., iii, 7-11)

The first separation here described is not yet the real beginning of opposition and of dialectics. It is merely the discovery of plurality in God's own self-consciousness. The appearance of structural dialectic comes only after a free and spiritual being has rebelled against God. The original separation is achieved through wisdom, and this first breaking of the unity is the point of departure for the creation of separated representations of God's inner plurality in an external and visible form. The first and the transcendent Fall -- Satan's alteration -- disturbs the inner unity by the will of self-hood. Through this act of freedom, by which

a creature made in the image of God attempts to remove the central image and place himself at the center of his being, a new mode of dialectic arises, changing the prevalent freedom into the terrible strife of opposites.

In Wisdom the first separation thus is realized. In her:

The eternity... has carried itself into a counterstroke, and made the separator of all the powers of the emanated being a steward of nature, by whom the eternal will rules, makes, forms, and shapes all things...The visible world with its host of creatures is nothing else than the emanated Word which has disposed itself into qualities, as in qualities the particular will has arisen. And with the receptibility of the will the creaturely life arose; which life has in the beginning of the world introduced itself into a receptivity for a creaturely ground, which the separator had separated according to the quality, and brought to a will of its own after such a fashion. And with the self-will of such desire substance or body of its likeness and quality has risen in each receptivity. (Beschau., iii, 12ff.)

As the first counterstroke Wisdom exists

as a mansion of the divine will, through which the divine will reveals itself; and is revealed to no peculiarity of individual will, by which this chooses to perform its marvelous works. It is the separator of the divine will, an instrument of God, into which the divine will has fashioned itself so as to be a wonder-worker of omnipotence and glory, by which he will rule all things. Wherefore also the divine understanding was given to it. (Beschau., iii, 17)

Thus did Boehme try to solve the problem of theodocy. The world is neither creature nor the body of God nor the objectum of God. Neither is it cut off and separated from the living source of life itself, an independent entity. Boehme thus avoided the pitfalls of pantheism and gnosticism. The world comes from the Chaos, or germ, which struggles to

realize, know, and manifest itself, and it contains the contradictory character of that Chaos. Life too is a mysterium, a paradoxical and contradictory reality, the source of which is God Himself.

2. The Glance (Blick) of Creativity

One of the most revealing of Boehme's images is his use of the idea of Glance, or in German Blick.

The self-knowledge and self-revelation of God in Wisdom perfects itself in a Blick, or a lightening-like flash of divine imagination or intuition -- a Blitz of the imagination. This is the central creative act. The Blick is the creative act which unlocks the secrets of the world.

The point of departure seems to be the symbolic conception of the Ungrund as an eye that sees in a mirror. The One, hidden, incomprehensible God is pure will to Himself; He is before thought and knowledge. The 'eternal eye' of this hidden God sees into the Nothing which He Himself is, into the supre-essential darkness of His own being:

for without nature is the nothing, which is an eye of eternity, an abyssal eye, that stands or sees in the nothing, for it is the abyss; and this same eye is a will, understand a longing for manifestation, to find the nothing. (Sig. Rer., iii,2)

Similarly:

Seeing then the first will is an ungroundedness, to be regarded as an eternal nothing, we recognize it to be like a mirror, wherein one sees his own image... For it is like an eye which sees, and yet conducts nothing in the seeing wherewith it sees. (Theos. Punkt., I, i,7)

The not-seeing Blick in the dark deeps of God becomes a seeing Blick when God leads Himself into comprehensible form in the patterns of His divine wisdom. In the first form of this Blick God comes to self-knowledge. This is the first

inner separation, the self-comprehension in opposition, in dialectics, the creation of the first antithesis:

God is in himself the unground, viz., the first world, of which no creature knows anything, for it lives with spirit and body solely in the ground. God also in the unground would not be manifest to himself, but from eternity his wisdom has become his ground, after which the eternal will of the unground of the Deity has longed, whereby the divine imagination arose, so that the unfathomable will of the Deity has thus from eternity in the imagination impregnated itself with the power of the vision or form of the mirror of wonders. Now, in this impregnation is to be understood the eternal origin of two principles, viz., (1) the eternal darkness, from which arises the world of fire; (2) the essence of wrath in the darkness, wherein we understand God's anger and the abyss of nature; thus we recognize the world of fire as the great life. We understand secondly, how from fire light is generated, and how between the world of fire and of light death appears; how light shines out of death, and how the light-flaming world is in itself a principle and a source other than the fire world, and yet neither is separated from the other. And we understand, thirdly, how the light world fills the eternal freedom, or the primal will which is called Father. (Menschw., II, iii, 5, 6)

Thus Boehme's dialectics of manifested being, or creation, take their rise from the original and central act of self-contemplation. In this first Blick a twofold act takes place: God contemplates his own form, thus creating being. From one point of view this first act is a contemplation of the unity of God. God as the One contemplates Himself and sees his own inner unity. This is an old idea of German mysticism: The Nichts sees itself as an Ich. This is the achievement of personality, of self-consciousness, the inner contemplation of unity:

From such a revelation of powers, in which the will of the eternal one contemplates itself, flows the understanding and the knowledge of the something (Ichts), as the eternal will contemplates itself in the something,

and in wisdom introduces itself into delight in a likeness and image. (Beschau., iii,4)


In this first act of self-contemplation, the Blick, there is -- in addition to the contemplation of unity -- a contemplation of the plurality of inner forms and patterns which the primitive unity contains within itself. The One is at the same time the All. Thus the central act of self-contemplation must at the same time reveal the secret unity and personality of God as well as open up the knowledge of the myriad forms and patterns contained in the immeasurable fullness of His Being. Thus the central Blick reveals the world of forms and patterns and is itself a dialectical act.

Thus understand the Holy Ternary in one essence: The Father is the eternity without ground, which is nothing, and yet all things; and in the eye of his glance he sees that he is all things; and in the power of the Majesty he feels, tastes, and smells that He is Good, that is, that He is God. (*Z. 7. 53, 15*)

There are then in the Blick two forms of the Divine imagination: self-knowledge of the unity, implying self-consciousness, and knowledge of the plurality of the world of forms. In the Blick, then, the knowledge of the world of forms first comes to be within the consciousness of God.

3. The Fire World

Boehme's Realdialectik begins to emerge. Another of his ideographs appears, his conception of the divine separation in the image of fire:

In the enkindling of fire lies the entire ground of all mystery... (in it) the spirit of God becomes moving, in the manner that air rises from fire. ()

Light (Lichtmetaphysic) is an ancient metaphysical symbol which played a large rôle in the philosophical systems of antiquity. The association of light with spirit and divinity was a natural one, for the separation of the One into many may be conceived as light separating itself into many rays. God the invisible is Himself the source of light (pater lumen).

Boehme's God is light only in so far as He is spirit. Yet light demands fire, for 'fire is the root of light'. (Mysterium Magnum, xxvi, 28). Light is the symbol of the Son; but then the Father, begetter of the Son, must be fire, and the Scripture does call the Lord a consuming fire. Fire is God in so far as he generates and produces the light;

Only the love is called God: the anger is called His strength and might. (Mysterium Magnum, xxiv, 10)

This divine fire never burns out, and it is never wholly consumed. It does not exhaust itself in producing the light.

Fire, like life, is thus a synthesis of opposites, a contraarium:

This nothing has in the nature of the fire advanced into a ground, and yet issues from nothing but the spirit of the source which is not a being either, but a source,

which gives birth to itself in itself in two properties.
(Menschw., I, i, 11)

Thus the two genetrixes, that of the wrath in fire and that of the love in the light, have brought their form into wisdom, where then the heart of God has longed in the love to make this mirrored form into an angelic image composed of the divine essence, so that they should be a likeness and image of the Deity. (Menschw. I,ii,4)

Fire and Light are dialectically interdependent:

In the original of the eternal nature, in the Father's property in the great mystery of all beings, it is wholly one: for the same only fire is in the angelical world, but in another source, viz., a love-fire, which is a poison, and a fire of anger to the devils, and to hell; for the love-fire is a death, mortification, and an enmity of the anger-fire; it deprives the wrath of its might, and this the wrath wills not, and it also cannot be; for if there were no wrath, there would be no fire, and also no light: If the eternal wrath were not, the eternal joy also would not be; in the light the wrath is changed into joy; the wrathful fire's essence is mortified as to the darkness in the wrathful fire, and out of the same dying the light and love-fire arise; as the light burns forth from the candle, and yet in the candle the fire and the light are but one thing. (Sig. Rer. xvi, 25)

Fire is not of itself alone, but it is the source and the Grund of Light. Fire does not produce light until it burns, and to burn there must be matter, stuff. This is all primitive speculation, but Boehme is getting to a profound idea: a burning 'living' fire must be nourished by material substance:

If now we would say how the three principles are united together, we must place fire in the middle as the highest force, which brings to each principle a satisfying life and a spirit that it requires. There is, therefore, in the principles no strife; for fire is the life of all principles -- understand, the cause of life, not the life itself. To the abyss it gives its pang, viz., the sting, so that death finds itself a life; else the abyss were a stillness. It gives its fierceness, which is the life, mobility and original condition of the abyss; else there were a still eternity and a nothing. And to the light world fire gives all its essence, else there were no feeling nor light therein, and all were only one... And to the third principle, viz., to the Kingdom of this world,

fire gives also its essence and quality, whereby all life and growth rises. All sense, whatever is to come to anything, must have fire. There springs nothing out of the earth without the essence of fire. It is the cause of all that can be named. (Six Theos Punkt.,ii, 10-12)

In order to burn fire needs matter, something to be consumed:

And though each principle has its center, the first principle stands in the magical quality, and its center is fire, which cannot subsist without substance; therefore its hunger and desire is after substance. (Theos. Punkt., I, 27)

Before our own eyes we see the great mystery: wrathful fire engenders amiable light and destroying matter by transforming matter into spirit.

Boehme returns to this central image of fire many times, because he feels that fire is the central symbol of the entire universe:

When we consider what life is, we find that it consists mainly in three elements, viz., desire, the desposition and thinking. If we investigate further, what it is which gives this, we find the center of the essential wheel, which contains within it the fire-smith himself. (Menschw., II,iii,7)

Fire is a miracle, and in this miracle Boehme sees the center of life; life, for him, is fire.

The consequences of this symbolism are many. If there is in God a burning center then it is necessary to postulate matter in God capable of being consumed. Fire needs fuel, and life is fire; where did the fuel come from?

The principle of fire is the root, and it grows in its root. It has in its proprium sour, bitter, fierceness and anguish, and these grow in the proprium in poison and death into the anguishful stern life, which in itself gives darkness, owing to the drawing in of the harshness.

Its properties are like sulphur, mercury, salt (Theos. Punkt.,) ii,38), symbols of the alchemical three principles. This dark matter, or root and proprium, is diaphanous and luminous insofar as it is penetrated and 'vanquished' by the light. The matter which burns is the dark, inchoate body of God; but the fire itself is filled by the Light.

And we give you thus to understand that in the Eternal there are not more than two principles: (1) the Eternal burning fire, which is filled with the Light; the Light gives it its property, so that from the burning source springs a high kingdom of joy; for anguish (Angst) attains freedom, and the burning fire thus remains but a cause of the finding of life and of the Light of the Majesty. The fire takes to itself the fire's property viz., life and self-discovery. And the second principle is understood in the Light; but the essential substantiality from which the fire burns remains eternally a darkness and a source of wrath wherein the devil dwells, we see that fire is a thing other than that from which the fire burns. Thus the Principle stands in fire, and not in the essential source of substantiality; the essential source is the center of nature, the cause of the principle, but it is dark and the fire is shining; here is shown rightly how the breaking of the wrath, viz., death, and also the eternal freedom out of nature, are both together the cause of the shining. For the wonder-spirit of the Ungrund is therefore desireful, in order that it may become shining; and hence it brings itself into qualification, that it may manifest its wonders in the qualification, for without qualification there can be no manifestation. (Menschw., Pt. II iii, 198)

The fire or the burning of the dark matter in the Ungrund produces both the wrath and the propitiation of that wrath, the first two of the three principles. Even in God there are two dialectical forces: a destruction and a birth, a death and a procreation.

There is thus a destructive, calcinating force in the ardent fire, a poisonous life (das böse Leben, das giftige Leben)

the creatures have poison, viz., a gall, for their life. The gall is the cause that there is a mobility by which life rises; for it occasions fire in the heart, and the right life is fire, but it is not the figure of life. (Theos. Punkt., i,70)

This poisonous life is opposed to pure being, to the amiable, luminous, light before God. But light, like the poisonous life, is produced by the fire, thus sharing the same source. Fire is then the coincidentia oppositorum, the one source which produces two opposing principles. Together this poisonous life and the light constitute the living body of God. Boehme is using the term 'nature' in a new sense, as meaning the divine nature, or the organic body of God, a different thing from the created universe.

The two principles of the divine nature thus find their common source in the fire, and fire is an illuminating symbol for the source of life itself. But in the end it is nothing more than a symbol of the deepest mysteries. Boehme is certainly not a fire-worshipper. Fire is not his God. Fire is for him nothing more than a highly significant natural process, symbolic of the creation of life itself. This symbol was doubtless mediated to Boehme by the alchemists, for with them fire is the purgative which transmutes baser into higher. But for Boehme fire is more than a soteriological function; it is analogous to the creative source of life itself. It remains but a symbol, though, merely a figure of what the central creative function is like.

The two principles which Boehme sees in the fire are analogous of all of life. The dialectical nature of the fire

God in Himself knows not what he is: for he knows no beginning of Himself, also he knows not anything that is like Himself, as also he knows no end of Himself. (Aurora, xxiii, 17b).

God is thus 'a nothing to Himself' (Mysterium Magnum, xxix,1).

In this primary stage, then, God is the unknown from two points of view: He is unknown to creature, for there is as yet no creature that can know Him; and He is unknown to Himself for He has not yet won for Himself the image of His self-consciousness. Here is the beginning of Boehme's dialectical speculation.

The first descriptive word which Boehme uses to expound this idea of God's unknowability comes from the oldest of mystical traditions: the Neoplatonic. God is the No-thing (Nichts). But this Nichts is not the negation of being. Nichts describes His noumenal, veiled, inexpressible unity -- the fulfillment of being, not its negation.

God is the nothing, which leads itself with the free longing into desire: For the nothing is an eternal will towards revelation, which can create the Ground for no creature, angel, nor person. The same will reveals itself with the eternal longing, through desire in triunity. The will in free longing is God, and He is free from desire. (Irrth. Stief, 145.

Without nature God is a mystery, understand in the nothing, for without nature is the nothing, which is an eye to eternity, an abysmal eye, that stands or sees in the nothing, for it is the abyss; and this same eye in a will, understand a longing after the manifestation, to find the nothing. (Sig. Rer., iii,2)

1 The distinction between the divine nothingness, the nihil a quo omnia, and that other nothingness from which all has been made, and of which nihil fit, of which nothing proceeds and where all things tend to lapse again, must be held. This latter is non-being. The former is superior to being and thought; the latter inferior. Non-being is rational, the superior being, irrational.

becomes a basic analogy for the dialectical structure of life itself. The two principles -- the dark world and the light world, the wrath and the love, the desire and the freedom, the self-in-contemplation and the self-in-action -- constitute the basic Jah and Nein of life in all its various manifestations. In reality there is a hungering after something. This is both unfulfillment and the knowledge of that fulfillment. The hungering and the desiring together produce reality:

And you understand how the Father's eternal Spirit divides into three worlds: First, he is the issuing out of the imagination of the primal will of the unground which is called father, as by the issuing He reveals wisdom and dwells in wisdom, and wears thus as his garment of great wonders. Secondly, He is the cause of contraction for the entity of darkness, i. e., of the second world, and is the cause and spirit for the origin of the essential fire. He is Himself the source of the anguish of the principle, brings the power, emerging from the anguish, from the dying, separates from the dying and enters into freedom, and dwells in freedom, and makes the light world. Thus, he is the flame of love in the light world. And here in this place the precious name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has its origin. For in the world of fire he is not called the Holy Spirit of God, but God's anger, God's wrath, in reference to which God calls himself a consuming fire. But in the light-world, in the Son of God, he is the flame of love and power of the holy divine life itself; there he is called God the Holy Spirit. And the light world is called wonder, counsel, and power of the deity: it is the Holy Spirit who reveals it, for he is the life therein. And everything together, wherever our heart and mind can reach, is nothing but those three worlds; in them lies everything. First, the eternal freedom, and in it the light with the power in the mirror of wisdom, and it is called God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The second world is the dark nature of the imagination, in the sour desiring will, the impregnation of desire, where all is in darkness, in perpetual fearful anguishful death. And the third world is the world of fire or the first principle, which arises in the anguish and is the great, strong, all-powerful life, in which the

the light-world dwells, but unapprehended on the part of fire. (MECH, II, 2-14, 166, 167)

Furthermore

We recognize, therefore, the eternal will-spirit as God, and the moving life of the craving (desire) as nature. For there is nothing prior, and neither is without beginning, and each is the cause of the other, and an eternal bond. (^)

Here the dialectical correlative relationship of God and nature is clear. The self-contemplative God (desire) produces a hunger; the self-acting God (Freedom) produces being. These are the two centers. The centrum of desire produces nature, while the centrum of the will produces the Trinity and the worlds of ends and light. There is an eternal birth in the will towards freedom and an eternal birth in the desire towards death. Two principles are thus produced, dialectical in their relationship.

4. Freedom and Desire: Dialectics

The being of the Absolute, it has been noted, forms itself into two contradictory centers: (1) that of freedom, whose dialectical development from clarity to light has been followed, and (2) that of desire, the unformed and the undetermined.

Desire opposed will, and in two ways: in the first place will in its essence is movement and expansion, a tendency to give itself, to communicate itself. The will is generous and giving:

The gentleness gives and the fire takes. The Gentleness is emanent from itself, and gives a substance that is like itself, every form from its own self, and the fire swallows this up, but out of it produces light. It gives something nobler than it has swallowed up - gives spirit for substance; for it swallows up the gentle beneficence, that is, the water of eternal life... Understand out meaning aright: God the Father is in Himself the freedom out of nature, but makes Himself manifest by fire in nature. The nature of fire is his property, though he is Himself the Ungrund where there is no feeling nor any pain. But he brings his desiring will into pain (Qual), and draws for himself in the pain another will to go out from the pain again into the freedom beyond pain. This other will is His Son... It is this other will... which breaks down death as the stern, dark source, which kindles fire and proceeds through dire as a shine or lustre of the fire, and fills the primal will which is called Father... Therefore, it can dwell in Freedom, that is, in the Father's will, and makes the Father bright, clear, gracious, and friendly;... it is the Father's substantiality, it fills the Father everywhere, although in him is no place, no beginning, no end. (Menschw., II, v,6-7)

Desire is a hunger for self which is opposed to this 'other will', begotten in pain; it is a hunger which seeks to satisfy itself, a thirst which seeks to be quenched, and a sight which

seeks to be satisfied. This will expands, pours out. Desire attracts:

For the Desire has nothing that it is able to make of to conceive. It conceives only itself, and impresses itself, that is, it coagulates itself, and draws itself to itself, and comprehends itself, and brings itself from abyss into byss; and overshadows itself with its magnetical attraction; so that the nothing is filled, and yet remains a nothing. (Mysterium Magnum iii,5)

This will is a centrifugal force, desire is centripidal. The will proceeds out from the Ungrund:

Thus then we can philosophize concerning the one good will of God and say, that he can desire nothing in himself and therefore he brings himself out of himself into a divisibility, into a center, in order that a contariety may arise in the emanation, viz., in that which has emanated, that good may in the evil become perceptible, effectual, and capable of will; namely, to will and separate itself from the evil and to re-will to enter into the one will of God (Mysterium Pansophicum, i, x 14ff)

Desire

is the stern attraction, and yet has nothing but itself or the eternally without foundation. And it draws magically, viz., its own undesiring into a substance. (Trd. U. Himml. Myst. iv,2)

Also

Now every desire is astringent, for it is its property. That is the first mother, and the drawing of the will in the desire is the second mother, for these are two forms which are contrary to each other. For the will is still like a nothing, grim like a still death, and the drawing is its movement. This, the still will in the astringency cannot suffer, and contracts much more violently in itself, and yet does not sharpen its own will in the drawing, and would enclose and hold the drawing by its astringent contraction, but only awakens it in this way. The harder the astringency gathers itself in with a view to holding the sting, the greater becomes the sting, the raging and breaking! For the sting will not allow itself to be kept down, and yet is held by its own mother so rigorously that it cannot withdraw. It wishes to be above itself, and its mother wishes to be below itself; for the astringency contracts unto itself and makes itself heavy, and is a

sinking below itself; it makes in the sulphur the phur and in mercury the sul, and the sting makes in phur the bitter form, the pang, an emnity in the astringency, and is always wishing to break loose from the astringency, but cannot. And if this is not possible, it becomes turning like a wheel, and turns continually on itself. That is the third form, from which arises essence and the wonder of plurality without number and ground. And in this wheel understand the wonder or power which the will, i. e., the primal unfathomable will, draws into itself from the mirror of the Ungrund for its center of heart; such is here the will of power and wonder. And in this wheel of the great anguish arises the other will, viz., the Son's will, to go out from the anguish into the will freedom of the primal unfathomable will, for the wheel causes nature to be. Accordingly nature first takes its origin thus: forms the centre and a breaking of the will eternity; it kills nothing, but constitutes the great life. (Menschw. II,iv,6)

It can thus be said that the will tends to posit being in order to give itself to others, to manifest or even to incarnate itself in them, while desire seeks to possess other beings in order to nourish and sustain itself. If the absolute is defined as the no-thing and as the All, then these two forces are logical realizations of the definitions themselves. There is though one curious aspect, namely, that while the will tends to posit being it is incapable of doing so, for to the creative desire, being the All of nature, the creative function applies.

The emanated will brings itself into a desire; and the desire is magnetic or intrahent, and the unity is immanent. Thus there is a contrarium, viz., Yes and No. For the flowing out has no ground, but the drawing in makes a ground. The nothing wishes to pass out of itself that it may become manifest, and the something wishes to be in itself that it may be sentient in the nothing, in order that the unity in it may become sentient. Accordingly the out and the in would thus be an inequality. And the No is therefore called a No, because it is a desire turned inwards, as shutting in to negativity. And the Yes is therefore called Yes, because it is an eternal efflux

or outgoing and the ground of all beings, that is, truth only. For it has no No before it; but the No first arises in the emanated will of receivability. (Theos. Frag. iii, 9-10)

Nature is the sum of organic forces; it is life and fertility, and consequently it engenders and produces being.

The primal will, i. e., God the Father, is and remains eternally free from the source of anguish as regards the will in itself. But its desiring becomes impregnate, and in process of desire nature with the forms first takes its rise. Nature dwells in the will, in God, and the will in nature, and yet there is no commingling. For the will is thin like a nonentity, therefore it is not seizable, and is not laid hold of by nature. For if it could be laid hold of, there would be in the deity but one person. It is indeed the cause of nature, but it is and remains nevertheless in eternity another world in itself. For nature exists in virtue of the essence from which the principle arises; but the clear Deity in Majesty exists not in the nature, and the shining light which proceeds from the Principle makes the seizable and unfathomable Deity manifest. The principle gives the lustre of Majesty, and yet contains it not in itself, but takes it from the mirror of virgin Wisdom, from the freedom of God. For if the mirror of wisdom were not, no fire could be generated; all has its origin in the mirror of the Deity. (Menschw. II, iii, 4)

Here Boehme explains his reasons for avoiding pantheism,.

The dialectical evolution of desire corresponds to the evolution of the will except that the process is reversed. The cycle of evolution is less pure and less rich because the life of desire is baffled. The will is clear, spirit, vision. But desire is passion (Treib. Strebe) and it is obscured by self-consciousness:

In nature's desire arises the death and the enclosing, and in the desire of the liberty arises the opening and the life; for the liberty's desire tinctures the desire of the dark nature, so that the wrathful mother forges her own right, and freely resigns to the liberty's desire, and so the life grows in death, for there is no life without light; but if the light goes out in the essence of the *foregoes*

Sulphur, then it is an eternal death, which no man can revive, unless God moves Himself in the lubet-desire in the same death; for death can receive no life in it, unless the first desire, viz., the free lubet's desire, manifests itself in the desire to nature, wherein the enclosing and the death are generated. (Sig. Rer. v,2)

Again:

The desire is the instigation of the essence, viz., an hunger, and the lubet is the hunger's essence, which it takes into itself; for the desire is only an hungry will, and it is the natural spirit in its forms; but the lubet is out of the liberty: For God is without desire as concerning his own essence, inasmuch as he is called God; for he needs nothing. All is His, and He Himself is all. (Sig. Rer., vi, 2)

Desire is thus the instinctive life which, in order to reveal itself to itself, must part from itself and prolong itself in the life of the spirit. It is in the spirit and not in itself that desire becomes self-conscious; or, more exactly, that spirit becomes conscious of desire. Instinctive desire, like nature, reveals itself to spirit:

When we consider what life is, we find that it consists mainly of three elements, viz., desire, the disposition, and thinking. If we investigate further, what it is which gives this, we find the center of the essential wheel, which contains within it the fire-smith himself. If we reflect further, from whence the essential fire arises, we find that it has its origin in the desiring of the eternal unfathomable will, which the desire makes for-itself a ground; for every will desires, and yet there is nothing before it that it can desire, save only itself. (Menschw., II, iii,7)

Spirit on the contrary being by nature forced to conceive itself reveals itself to itself:

But seeing the desire, viz., the astringency becomes only the more strong thereby (for from the stirring arises the wrath and nature, viz., the motion) the first will to the desire is made wholly austere and a hunger, for it is in a hard compunctive dry essence, and also cannot get rid and quit of it, for itself makes the essence, and likewise possesses it, for thus it finds itself now out

of nothing in the something, and the something is yet
~~it~~ a contrary will, for it is an unquietness and the free-
 will is a stillness. (Sig. Rer., ii,14)

Thus the necessary correlative and dialectical nature of spirit and desire, light and darkness, freedom and desire is perhaps evident, even though it is clear that spirit and light occupy superior ontological positions to that of desire:

For if there were but one will, then all essences would do but one thing: but in the counterwill each exalts itself in itself to its victory and exaltation. And all life and vegetation stands in this contest, and thereby the divine wisdom is made manifest, and comes into form to contemplation, and to the kingdom of joy; for in the conquest is joy. But one only will is not manifest to itself, for there is neither evil nor good in it, neither joy nor sorrow; and if there were, yet the one, viz., the only will, must first in itself bring itself into a contrary, that it might manifest itself. (Mysterium Magnum, xl,8)

Absolute desire is desire in a pure state; it is also incompleteness. It is an everlasting hunger after perfection, and it is the hunger of the incomplete becoming to be. Desire is the aspiration for sight; it is a dark abyss in which the cosmos is engulfed -- the deep yawning bottomless pit of death. It is in itself eternal death, endless torment, the anguish and yet the source of life.

But abstract desire is meaningless. Desire is always a desire for something. It is an aspiration towards something that can nourish it. Desire seeks for something which it then attracts and engulfs in itself. It eternally seeks to be a something, but it is always a nothing. It is deficient being and perhaps (if the word can be ventured without being misunderstood) it is meonic -- non-being ! Since however there

is nothing which it can find it retracts within its own self and fills itself from itself, and in thus drawing upon itself it torments itself, producing Angst. Through this 'purgative' it becomes larger and purer, finally acquiring determined being.

For the eternal nature has produced nothing in its desire, except a likeness out of itself; and if there were not an everlasting mixing, there would be an eternal peace in nature, but so nature would not be revealed and made manifest, in the combat it becomes manifest; so that each thing elevates itself, and would get out of the combat into the still rest, and so it runs to and fro, and thereby only awakens and stirs up the combat. And we find clearly in the light of nature that there is no better help and remedy for this opposition, and that there ~~is~~ no higher cure than the liberty, that is, the light of nature, which is the desire of the spirit. And then we find, *not* that the essence ~~can~~ be better remedied than with the assimilate; for the essence is a being, and its desire *is* ~~so~~ after being! Now every taste desires only its like, and if it obtains it, then its hunger is satisfied, appeased and eased, and it ceases to hunger, and rejoices in itself, whereby the sickness falls into a rest in itself; *it has* for the hunger ~~is~~ the contrariety ceases to work. (Sig. Rer., ii, 4-6)

The Self that aspires for itself can kill (i. e., consume) itself. This is the same conditioning factor that is also present in the willing activity of the will. The will in willing itself limits itself; so the desire in desiring itself consumes itself. This is the heart of Boehme's dialectics.

Desire is paradoxical because it is anxiety, fear, and the negation of self. It seeks to realize itself within a being and by such realization it destroys itself because it ceases to exist the moment it is sateated. Desire tends to devour itself, and this tendency creates in life a deep metaphysical Angst

Suppose that I have the power to take away the light from the fire (which however cannot be) and see what would follow upon it. Consider! If I take away the light from the fire (1) the light loses its essence, by which it shines; (2) it loses its life and becomes a powerlessness; (3) it is seized and overcome by the darkness, extinguished in itself and becomes a nothingness, for it is the eternal freedom and a groundlessness; while it shines it is good; and when it is extinguished, it is nothing. Consider further! What have I remaining of the fire if I take away the light and lustre from it? Nothing but a dry hunger and a darkness. It loses essence and life, is anhungered and becomes likewise a nothingness. Its former sulphur is a death; it consumes itself as long as the essence exists. When the essence is no more, there is a nothingness or groundlessness, where no vestige remains. (Menschw. I, v, 13-14)

The ultimate threat of existence is the end of desire unless it is checked by freedom. Fire, life, and nature have been posited to explain spirit and light, but left to themselves and not checked they tend to death.

Real life is a Contrarium, a struggle, and -- thankfully -- a victory, a final triumphant victory of life over death. But the hard fact remains that

Fierce, wrathful death is thus the root of life. And here, ye men, consider your death and also Christ's death, who has begotten us again out of death through the fire of God; for out of death is the fire of life born. Whatever can go out from death is released from death and the source of wrath. That is now the Kingdom of joy... And thus out of death life attains eternal freedom, where there is no more any fear or terror; for in life the terror is broken. (Theos. Punkt., i, 73)

At life's center, then, there is death, for

on the other part life proceeds out of death, and death must therefore be a cause of life. Else if there were no such poisonous, fierce, fervent source, fire could not be generated, and there could be no essence nor fiery sharpness; hence there would be no light, and also no finding of life. (Theos. Punkt., i, 68)

The wrathful, dark, deathlike aspect of desire is the metaphysical basis of Boehme's doctrine of sin. But Boehme by no means

identifies sin with death, Κε οκ. That would be too easy. Sin results from desire, from self-will, and from the tendency of desire and self-will towards non-being. But sin is not non-being. Being is a victory over non-being and life -- eternal life -- is the synthesis of death with that which opposes it. The central fire, or punctum, is

the only cause of the life and motion of all the powers; and without it all would be in the stillness without motion. (Mysterium Magnum, x, 43.)

Thus it is that death engenders life.

There are thus these two contraries: life and death, light and darkness, good and evil, Jah and Nein, freedom and desire. And by their dialectical opposition they produce a third. The process of this generation cannot be seized by the rational mind (Vernunft) but must be grasped by the intuitive intelligence (Verstand). Discursive reason abstracts and these abstractions are unreal, for the cyclic life-process then would be halted in mid-stream. This is impossible. Life is movement and it must be grasped as a whole by the intuitive intelligence (Verstand), embracing the process as well as the totality of the stages in one act of knowing. In Verstand no one phase opposes the other, but each implies the other.

1. Boehme reverses the use of these two words. Both Luther before him and the entire tradition of German idealism after him used Verstand for rational knowledge and Vernunft for the larger intelligence. Cf. E. Seeberg, Christus Wirklichkeit und Urbild, pp. 16-17.

Thus

that cannot enter into particular existence which has no ground, which cannot be comprehended, which dwells in itself and possesses itself; but it proceeds out of itself, and manifests itself out of itself. (Theos. Punkt., vi, 7)

Divisibility, manifestation in particular existence, is an expression of the difference of things which underneath and behind these differences cannot be without each other. (Sig. Rer. xiv,9). These powers are not isolated, but merely polarities which arise and oppose themselves in the chaotic Ungrund, and which are manifested in all reality. Their synthesis implies a common source. Their synthesis is in fact real for fire and light have one source. In the fire (as in the Ungrund) all opposites find their coincidence, and it is Verstand which can know these opposites in their coincidence while Vernunft falsely seeks to know only the abstractions. True knowledge is knowledge of the full coincidence of the opposites in the fire and in the Ungrund. The discovery of the eternal Nothing, in which Father, Son, and Spirit behold and find themselves, is God's wisdom or His Intuition. (Gnad. i,6). This original intuition is the conspection of self, i. e., self-consciousness. (Gnad., ii,8)

Why does this germ of the absolute thus develop into its own manifestation? It evolves from the coincidental source in order to become true spirit, the master of nature and of life. Out of the primal 'separation' two things result: life, and the body which is essential to life. (Sig. Rer., ii,18) To escape the death which is in the fire, life is born -- the

realization of the All, the germinal potentiality within the Ungrund. (Theos. Punkt., i, 64)

Thus life proceeds out of death, and death must therefore be a cause of life. Else... there could be no light, and no finding of life. (Theos. Punkt., i, 68)

Again:

In fire there is death: The eternal nothing dies in the fire; and from the dying comes the holy life. Not that there is a dying, but that life is love arises in this way from the painfulness. The nothing or the unity thus takes an eternal life into itself, so that it becomes sentient, but proceeds again out of the fire into the nothing. (Gnad., ii, 32.)

It follows then that whenever Boehme describes the generation of the mental, or as he calls it the supersensual, life he presents the cycle of life. The free will is desiring; and desire is a will. They interpenetrate, i. e., oppose each other. But this dialectical opposition produces the cyclic movement, life itself:

We understand, secondly, how from fire light is generated, and how between the world of fire and of light death appears: how light shines out of death, and how the light-flaming world is in itself a principle and a source other than the fire-world, and yet neither is separated from the other, nor can either lay hold of the other. And we understand, thirdly, how the light world fills the eternal freedom, or the primal will, which is called Father. Fourthly, we understand also here earnestly and fundamentally how the natural life that wishes to dwell in the light-flaming world, must pass through death and be born out of death, understand the life which has its origin from the darkness, from the essence of the dark nature, that is to say, man's soul, which in Adam had turned itself away from the fire-world to the dark nature. Then, fifthly, we understand fundamentally and very exactly, why God, i. e., the heart of God, became man, why he had to die, enter into death and break his life in death, and then bring it through the world of fire into the light flaming world; and why we must follow him. Sixthly, why many souls remain in the world

of fire, and cannot pass through drath into the light world, and what death is; also what the soul is.
(Gnad., iii,6)

This is life, moving from chaotic, unconscious nothingness to self-consciousness, with its eternal tension between life and death; and finally to the struggle and victory of life over death, a struggle that takes place within the consciousness of man himself.

This is a cosmic drama: the formless seeks form; it achieves it, but in the moment of the achievement it finds itself confronted with potential death. Then it struggles to avoid its own death by the reconciliation of form (Personality) with death (non-being and formlessness). In the end by Christ life triumphs! Christus Victor!

'The Spirit engenders itself in nature' -- this is an exact proposition, one of the most important in Boehme's system. And in this cyclic engendering spirit finds that by making a body for itself it has introduced death, a devouring, consuming fire, into its own being. And all of Boehme's many images, derived from alchemy, folklore, superstition, religion, were mustered to explain this tremendous struggle which he found in his world, in his self, and in his God.

5. The Seven Natural Powers (Gestalten) --the Life Cycle

In Boehme's view divine nature, or God's body, is the goal towards which the dark unfathomable will towards manifestation is striving. Life, he firmly believed, could only exist in bodily form. Abstraction was not a living state. Life is cyclic; it is the search of the Unconditioned for condition; the struggle of the formless to express its own internal potentialities in its own natural form. Body is the structural form inherent in reality -- this is the essential principle of romanticism.¹ And 'body' in Boehme's sense is self-consciousness, form, personality, comprehensibility, and such as can be known, felt, willed, and loved. The Ungrund is unconditioned, being infinite and chaotic; but all other forms and aspects of deity and nature are conditioned, that is, in the process of achieving the structures that are innate in their beings.

But when the eternal will has found its manifestation in 'bodily' form it also discovers that it has found a life of tension and dialectic. This cannot be endured. A new goal arises -- the redemptive life, or the search for a bodily life in which the limitations accompanying finitude have been overcome. Thus another life cycle begins. Another 'birth' is sought. The theogonic cycle is the struggle to achieve form:

1. S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, passim.

with this struggle the limitation of form is also achieved-- death. Now a new life cycle begins, one which leads to ultimate redemption, to the removal of the limitations of the body, to the conquering of death, to the new birth.

Here Boehme's break with Neoplatonic thought is at its clearest. He accepts the emanation of the all from the One. But he does not agree that salvation is the return of the all to the One. He felt that the return of the Many to the One would be a partial salvation, for the principle of death inherent in plurality would still not be overcome. Thus, salvation for Jacob Boehme was not a retreat into the One, thus avoiding and escaping the meonic limitations of corporeal existence, but salvation and redemption by the overcoming of these same meonic limitations. No spirit was real, he felt, until it had achieved a form in which meonic tendencies had been destroyed. Thus Boehme's life cycle did not retreat, but advanced into a real Kingdom of God -- a Kingdom of perfect but individual beings, with real bodies, living in a real world of first and last, where men sit down to eat and drink with Jesus and His disciples. The One is not the Counterpart of non-being; Boehme's Ungrund is rather not-yet-being -- the counterpart of that Kingdom of joy, prefigured in the theogonic Sophia.

As he sat at his writing table Jacob Boehme saw in the candle before him the prototype of the life cycle. In it the life process was prefigured. In the candle there was a threefold aspect: first, there was the tallow, wax, and wick; secondly

there was the mysterious fire, the separator; and thirdly there was the unseen world of smoke, gas, and air -- the tallow in a new form. (Incidentally, implied in Boehme's approach is the chemical law of the conservation of matter.) As his candle burned, the tallow changed into gas. This was the life-process: congealed, dead matter is constantly being changed into heavenly matter. Thus the similitude of the life cycle may be

seen in a burning candle, when the fire absorbs and consumes the candle. There the being or substance dies, that is, in the dying of the darkness it is transformed in the fire into a spirit and into another quality (which is understood in the light), for in the candle no true feeling life is understood. But with the kindling of the fire the being of the candle passes into a consumming process, into a painful motion in life; and as the result of this painful feeling the Nothing or the One becomes Light and shining in a large room. (Gnad., ii,15)

Like all reality, Boehme's candle is a depository of the Three Principles. Here Boehme's relationship to the transmutation process of the alchemists is clear.

Within being there is a hunger for manifestation, and since there can be no manifestation without duality, the generating power divided into principles, or polarities, for manifestation through a cyclic process. Vague and uncertain as it is, Boehme's cyclic series of seven natural powers constitutes the heart of his ideas of manifested being. These seven stages derive in an indirect fashion from the seven stages in the alchemical process of transmutation, from the seven days of creation, from the

seven planets.

Boehme himself lists these seven powers of nature in a note which he gave to Abraham von Sommerfeld and which became a part of the Mysterium Magnum (vi, 21):

(See chart on following page)

This is Boehme's own tabulation of his seven natural powers in a work of his maturity. The superscription suggests the relationship of these seven natural powers to the theogonic seven. These seven natural powers are the 'seven spirits of God' as they show and manifest themselves in the various forms of existence.¹

In the Signatura Rerum Boehme interprets these seven powers of nature as elements, describing their interrelationships in alchemical language. This suggests their separation from the theogonic hierarchy of being.

Now, what are these properties of nature? They are, in short, God's properties in His self-manifestation:

Albeit I have written...of the forms of nature...yet it must not be understood as if the Deity were circumscribed or limited....I write only of the properties, how God has manifested himself through the internal, and through the external nature; which are the chiefest forms of his mani-

¹ The fact that Boehme himself is confused at this point, and that as his speculation matured he tended more and more to separate the two groups of seven, the theogonic and the natural, seems to prove and to justify the division of the two sets of seven powers in any discussion of his speculation. This problem, it must be confessed, has proven the most difficult of all the problems in Boehme's speculation, and there is no certainty that the solution here presented is the final one. This is, certainly, the heart of all metaphysical problems.

The Seven Spirits of God or Powers of Nature; as they show and manifest themselves in Love and Angel, both in the Heavenly and Hellish Kingdom, and also in the Kingdom of this world.

1. Astringent, Desire	Hardness, Cold, Covetousness.	Cold, Hardness, Bone, Salt.
2. Attraction or Compunction of Senses.	Compunction, Envy	Person, Life, Growth, Senses
3. Anguish, or Mind	Enmity	Sulphur, Perceivance, Paine.
4. Fire, or Spirit	Pride, Anger Love Fire	Spirit, Reason, Desire.
5. Light or Love-Desire	Meekness	Venus-Sport, Life's Light.
6. Sound or Understanding	Divine Joy	Speaking, Crying, Distinguishing
7. Body or Essence	Heaven	Body, wood, stone, earth, Mettals, Hearbs.

This was received from the author in such a forme by Abraham von Sommerfeldt

Mysterium Magnum vi, 21.

festation. These seven properties are to be found in all things; and he is void of understanding that denies it. These seven properties make, in the internal world, the Holy Element, viz., the holy life and matter. (Mysterium Magnum, vii, 17-19.)

The seven powers of nature (Gestalten) reveal themselves as the scientia or the speaking, as the breathing forth, as the circumscribing, as the forming, and as the bringing into properties of the one Eternal God:

The circumscribing is the Fiat; and the scientia or desire is the beginning that springs from the temperment for differentiation. The whole ground is contained in the passage where it is said, God created by the Word. The Word remains in God, and with the scientia or desire proceeds out of itself into division. This is to be understood thus: the scientia is eternal in the Word, for it rises in the Will. In the Word it is God; and in the division, in the circumscribing, it is the beginning of nature. (Gnad., iii,2)

The entire process is magnificently described in a lengthy but important passage in Mysterium Magnum -- a passage in which the difficult, non-conceptual imagery of Boehme becomes clearer:

The desire proceeding from the will of the abyss is the first form, and it is the Fiat, or, Let there Be. And the power of the free lubet is God, who governs the Fiat, and both together are named Verbum Fiat, that is, the eternal Word, which creates where nothing is; and is the original of nature, and of all essences. The first property of the desire is astringent, harsh, impressing, self-conceiving, self-overshadowing; and it makes, first the great darkness of the abyss; Secondly, it makes itself substantial in a spiritual manner, wholly rough, harsh, hard, thick, and it is a cause of coldness, and all keenness and sharpness; also of all whatsoever that is called essence: and it is the beginning of perceivancy, wherein the free lubet does find and perceive itself, and introduces the contemplation of itself. But the desire in itself brings itself thereby into pain and source; Yet the free lubet does only so receive finding or perceivancy. The second form or property is the constringency or attraction of the desire; that is, a compunction stirring or motion. For each desire is attractive and con-

stringent, and is the beginning of motion, stirring, and life, and the true original of the Mercurial Life of the painful or tormenting source. For here arises the first enmity between the astringency or hardness, and the compunction or sting of stirring; for the desire makes hard thick, and congeals, as the cold stiffens and freezes the water. Thus the astringency is a mere raw coldness, and the compunction, viz., the attraction, is yet brought forth with the impression. It is even here as father and son: the father would be still, and hard, and the compunction, viz., the son, stirs in the father, and causes unquietness. And this the father, viz., the astringency, cannot endure; and therefore he attracts the more eagerly and earnestly in the desire, to hold and shut the disobedient son; whereby the son grows only more strong in the compunction. And this is the true ground and cause of sense, which in the free lubet is the eternal beginning of the motion of the powers, colours, and virtues, and of the divine kingdom of joy; and in the dark desire it is the original of enmity, pain and torment; and of the eternal original of God's anger, and of all unquietness and contrariety. The third property is the anguish, or source, or welling forth, which the first two properties make. When the compunction, viz., the stirring, strives and moves with rage in hardness or impression, and bruises the hardness, then in the contrition of the hardness the first sense of feeling does arise, and is the beginning of the essences; for it is the severation whereby, in the free lubet, in the word of the powers, each power becomes severable and sensible in itself. It is the origin of distinction, whereby the powers are, each in itself, mutually manifest; also the origin of the sense and of the eternal mind. For the eternal mind is the all-essential power of the Deity; but the senses arise through nature with the motion in the division or differentiation of powers, where each power does perceive and feel itself in itself. It is also the origin of taste and smell. When the perceivance of the powers in the distinction has mutual intercourse and entrance into each other, then they feel, taste, smell, hear, and see one another; and herein arises the joy of life, which, in the stillness of the power of God in liberty, could not be. Therefore, the divine understanding brings itself into spiritual properties, that it might be manifest to itself, and be a working life. Now we are to consider the anguish in its own generation and peculiar property; for just as there is a mind, viz., an understanding, in the liberty, in the Word of the power of God, so likewise the first will to the desire brings itself in the desire of the darkness into a mind; which mind is the anguish source, viz., a sulphurous-source, and yet here only spirit is to be understood. The anguish-source is thus to be understood: the astringent desire conceives itself,

and draws itself into itself, and makes itself full, hard, and rough; now the attraction is an enemy of the hardness. The hardness is retentive, the attraction fugitive: the one will into itself, and the other will out of itself; but since they cannot sever and part asunder one from the other they remain in each other as a rotating wheel: the one will ascend, the other descend. For the hardness causes substance and weight, and the compunction gives spirit and the active life: These both mutually circulate in themselves and out of themselves, and yet cannot go any whither. What the desire, viz., the magnet, makes hard, that the attraction does again break into pieces, and it is the greatest unquietness in itself, like a raging madness: and it is in itself a horrible anguish; and yet no right feeling is perceived until the fire arises (or until the enkindling of the fire in nature, which is the fourth form, wherein the manifestation of each life appears.) And I leave it to the consideration of the true understanding searcher of nature, what this all means; let him search and bethink himself; he will find it in his own natural and paternal knowledge. The anguish makes the sulphurous spirit, and the compunction makes the Mercury, viz., the work-master of nature; he is the life of nature, and the astringent desire makes the keen salt-spirit; and yet all three are only one; but they divide themselves into three forms, which are called Sulphur, Mercurius, Sal: These three properties do impress the free lubet into themselves, that it also gives a material essentiality, which is the oil of these three forms (viz., their life and joy), which does quench and soften their wrathfulness; and this no rational man can deny. There is salt, brimstone and oil in all things; and the Mercurius, viz., the vital venom makes the essence in all things, and so the abyss brings itself into byss and nature. The fourth form of nature is the enkindling of the fire, where the sensitive and intellective life does first arise, and the hidden God manifests himself: For without Nature he is hidden unto all creatures, but in the eternal and temporal nature he is perceived and manifest. And the manifestation is first effected by the awakening of the powers, viz., by the three above mentioned properties, Sulphur, Mercurius, and Sal, and therein the oil is manifested, in which the life has its vital being and radiance, life and lustre. The true life is first manifest in the fourth form, viz., in the fire and light; in the fire the natural, and in the light the oily spiritual; and in the power of the light the divine intellectual or understanding life is manifest. (Mysterium Magnum, iii, 8-20)

And then Boehme warns the reader:

Reader, attend and mark aright: I understand here, with the description of nature, the eternal, not the temporal nature. I shew thee only the temporal nature thereby; for it is expressed or spoken forth out of the eternal, and therefore do not foist in or allege calves, cows, or oxen, as it is the course of irrational reason in Babel to do. (Mysterium Magnum, iii,20)

Here the first four of the seven natural powers are described in relationship to the alchemical Grundsubstanzen and in relation to the persons of the Trinity. Boehme's underlying idea here is clear, the idea that life reproduces the trinitarian structure, that matter, the stars, the psyche of man are also trinitarian and therefore the constitutive elements of all being.



In this scheme the first three elements, acting one upon the other in dialectical fashion, finally move on to the separator, to the fire. Thus the alchemical purgative and purifier becomes also the spiritual 'separator', the basis of all spiritual life. This is clear from a long and perhaps confusing passage from Signatura Rerum:

The fourth form in this essence is the fire, which as to one part takes its original out of the dark hard impression, viz., from the hardness, and from the raging sting in the anguish, which is the cold black fire, and the pain of the great anguish; and as to the other part it takes its original in the will's spirit to nature, which goes again out of this hard darkncoldness into itself, viz., into the liberty without the nature of the austere motion, and enkindles the liberty viz., the eternal lubet to the desire of nature, with its sharpness, which it has conceived in the impression, whereby it is a moving and stirring lustre: For the liberty is neither dark nor light; but by reason of the motion it is light, for its lubet brings itself into the desire to light, that it may be manifest in the light and lustre; and yet it cannot be otherwise brought to pass but through darkness, so that the light might be made known and manifest, and the eternal mind might find and manifest itself; for a will is only one thing and essence, but through

the multiplicity its form is made manifest, that it is infinite, and a mere wonder, of which we speak with a babe's tongue, being only as a little spark out of these great infinite wonders. Now understand ~~it~~ thus: the liberty is, and stands in the darkness (and including the dark desire after the desire of the light), it attains with the eternal will the darkness; and the darkness reaches after the light of the liberty, and cannot attain it; for it encloses itself with the desire in itself, and makes itself darkness in itself; and out of both of these, viz., out of the dark impression, and out of the desire of the light or liberty towards the impression, there is a twinkling (or darting) flash in the impression, viz., the original of the fire; for the liberty shines in the impression, but the impression in the anguish comprehends it into itself, and so it is now as a flash; But seeing the liberty is incomprehensible, and as a nothing, and moreover without and before the impression, and abyssal, therefore the impression cannot conceive or hold it; but it gives itself into the liberty, and the liberty devours its dark property and essence, and rules with the assumed mobility in the darkness, unapprehensible to the darkness. Thus understand us aright: There is in the fire a devouring; the sharpness of the fire is from the austere impression of the coldness and bitterness, from the anguish; and the devouring is from the liberty, which makes out of the something again a nothing, according to its property. And understand us very exactly and well: The Liberty will not be a nothing, for therefore the lubet of the liberty introduces itself into nature and essence, that it might be manifest in power, wonder, and being; it likewise assumes to itself through the sharpness in the cold and dark impression the properties, that it might manifest the power of the liberty: For it consumes the darkness in the fire, and proceeds forth out of the fire, out of the anguish of the impression, with the spiritual properties in the light; as you see, that the outward light so shines forth out of the fire, and has not the source and pain of the fire in it, but only the property; the light manifests the properties of the darkness, and that only in itself; the darkness remains in itself dark, and the light continues in itself light. The liberty (which is called God) is the cause of the light; and the impression of the desire is the cause of the darkness and painful source; Now herein understand two eternal beginnings, viz., two principles, one in the liberty in the light, the other in the impression in the pain and source of the darkness, each dwelling in itself. And understand us farther concerning their opening essence and will, how nature is introduced into seven properties; for we speak not of a beginning, for there is none in eternity; but thus the eternal generation is from eternity to eternity in itself; and

this same eternal generation has according to the property of eternity through its own desire and motion introduced itself with this visible world (as with a likeness of the eternal spirit into such a creaturely being which is a type or platform of the eternal being) into a time, of which we will speak afterwards, and show what the creature is, namely a similitude of the operation of eternity, and how it has also this same working temporarily in itself. Now concerning the fire understand us thus: The fire is the principle of every life; to the darkness it gives essence and source, else there would be no sensibility in the darkness, also no spirit, but mere hardness, a hard, sharp, bitter, galling, sting, as it is really so in the eternal darkness; but so far as the hot fire may be obtained, the dark compunctive property stands in the aspiring covetous greediness like to a horrible madness, that it may be known what wisdom and folly is. Now the fire gives also desire, source, and properties to the light, viz., to the liberty; yet know this, the liberty, viz., the nothing, has no essence in itself, but the impression of the austere desire makes the first essence, which the will-spirit of the liberty (which has manifested itself through the nature of the desire) receives into itself, and brings it forth through the fire, where the grossness, viz., the rawness does then die in the fire. Understand it thus: When the flash of fire reaches the dark essentiality, then it becomes a great flagrant where the cold fire is dismayed, and does as it were die, falls into a swoon, and sinks down: And this flagrant is effected in the enkindling of the fire in the essence of the anguish, which has two properties in it: viz., the one goes downwards into the death's property, being a mortification of the cold fire, from whence the water arises, and according to the grossness, the earth is risen; and the other part ascends in the will to the liberty, in the lubet, as a flagrant joyfulness; and this same essence is also mortified in the flagrant in the fire, understand the cold fire's property, and gives also a water-source, understand such a property. Now the flash, when it is enkindled in liberty, and by the cold fire, makes in its rising a cross with the comprehension of all properties: for here arises the spirit in the essence, and it stands thus:



If thou hadst here understanding, thou need ask no more: it is eternity in time, God in love and anger, and moreover heaven and hell. The lower part, which is thus marked  is the first principle, and is the eternal nature in the anger, viz., the Kingdom of darkness dwelling in itself; and the upper part, with the figure  is the salniter: The upper cross above the circle is the Kingdom of glory, which proceeds forth in the flagrant of joy, is the will of the free lubet in itself out of the fire in the lustre of the light into the power of the liberty; and this spiritual water, which also

arises in the flagrant⁸ joy, is the corporality, or essentiality, in which the lustre from the fire and light makes a tincture, viz., a budding and growing, and a manifestation of colours, from the fire and light.
(Signatura Rerum, xiv, 23-24)

The fire separates the material, creating the three upper forms -- the spiritual world. The fifth form simply is designated as 'light', and is the triumphant Kingdom of the great love of God (Mysterium Magnum, vi, 18)

The fifth form in the scientia is the true love-fire, which separates itself in the light from the painful fire, and therein the divine Love in being is understood. For the powers separate in the fire-terror, and become desirous in themselves. In this form also is understood every characteristic of the first three forms, yet no longer in pain, but in joy; and in their hunger or desire, so to speak. That is, in the desire they draw themselves into being; they draw the tincture of fire and light, viz., Virgin Sophia, into themselves, and it is their food, as the great sweetness, or pleasing delight and agreeable savour. This becomes embodied in the desire of the first three forms in being, which is called the corpus of the tincture, and is the divine essentiality, Christ's heavenly corporeality...this tincture is the power of speech in the Word, and the entity is the Word's comprehension, where the word becomes essential...This fifth form has all the powers of the divine wisdom in it. It is the root-stalk of the plant of eternal life, a food of the fiery soul, as also of the angels, and that which cannot be expressed...and it is called the power of the glory of God...by means of this power all things grow, blossom, and yield their fruit, and this power is contained in the quinta essential, and is a cause of disease. (Gnad., iii, 26-28)

The sixth form is the sound in the divine word, the introduction of the divine Kingdom of Joy into the audible powers:

The sixth form is the scientia, in the divine power, is speech, namely the mouth of God, the sound of the powers, where the Holy Spirit in the love comprehension brings itself manifestly out of the comprehended power; as we are to understand in the image of God in man, by reference to man's speech. So likewise there is a sensual effectual speaking in the divine power in the temperament, And by this effectual speaking is rightly understood the five senses, namely, a spiritual hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling, where the manifestation of the powers

work together unitedly. This operancy the Spirit speaks forth into a distinct sound, as is to be understood in man, as well as in the expressed word in the created creature -- both in animated and in insensible vegetative beings. For the spiritual world of the spiritual sound has been incorporated in the creation, and therefrom the sound of all beings has its origin. This sound in material things is called a mercurial power, as arising out of the fiery hardness; and here the other powers cooperate and lend assistance, so that a tune or song is produced as is to be seen in animated beings, whereas in insensible things there is a sonorousness; as we see in a concert of music, how all the melody which the understanding can bring forth is united together in a single composition. Further, we are to understand in the sixth form the true meaning of the thoughts or percipient senses. For when the spirit has brought itself out of the (separated) qualities, it is in the temperment again, and has all the qualities in it. Of whatever the body is a substantial power, of that the spirit is a soaring power, wherein mind is understood, from which the thoughts take their rise (Gnad., iii, 31-33.)

The seventh form is Essence, being, the mansion house and rest of the soul, the Kingdom of divine glory where all the tensions of life are overcome in peaceful repose.

The seventh form is the scientia of the divine power in the comprehended being of all powers, where the sound or the speaking word embodies itself in being, as an entity in which the sound (spirit) embodies itself for manifest utterance. The fifth comprehension in love is wholly spiritual, viz., the purest essentiality. But this seventh form is a comprehensibility of all the qualities, and is properly called the whole of nature, or the formed, expressed word. It is the inner, divine uncreated heaven, but stands connected with the divine active birth of the temperment; and it is called Paradise, as a growing life of the comprehended working divine powers, in manner as the scientia (attraction) draws out of the earth by the sun's desire a growth of wood, herbs, and grass, for the scientia (desire of the earth) also had its origin from thence. (Gnad., iii, 37-38)

The seventh form is like the day of rest, the Sabbath:

in which the working life of the divine power rests. Therefore God commanded man to rest in it, for it is the

true image of God, wherein God has perpetually fashioned himself from eternity into an eternal being. And if we would but see, it is Christ, that is the right man as created in Adam, who fell, and in the works of the six days brought himself with desire into unrest, and awakened and set up the dark world, which God with his supreme love tincture, in the name Jesus, tinctured again in man, and introduced into the eternal sabbath of rest.
(*Enchiridion*, iii, 39)

Here then is Boehme's life cycle, grounded in the three principles and embodying them within the life-cycle. These seven natural forms (Gestalten) may be compared to the seven planets. Boehme believed that the ancient astronomers

have given names to the seven planets according to the seven forms of nature; but they have understood thereby another thing, not only the seven stars, but the seven-fold properties in the generation of all essences. (Sig. Rer. ix, 8)

Boehme identifies the planets with these seven natural forms thus: 1. Jupiter, 2. Saturn, 3. Mars, 4. Sol., 5. Venus, 6. Mercury, and 7. Luna. Confusion arises in the fact that the sixth form symbolized by the planet Mercury is also one of the three basic alchemical elements, and Boehme sometimes speaks of it as an element, although he is usually careful of distinguishing the element from the planet.

It is these seven forms which constitute the basis of creaturely existence:

We are to understand that the seven days and their names have their origin in these seven forms, all seven arising from a single one, which is the beginning of the motion of the Mysterium Magnum. The seventh is the day of rest, in which the working life of the six pro-

1. Is Boehme referring to the Gnostics? Cf. Hans Leisegang, Die Gnosis (Leipzig, 1936), pp. 231-232, and passim.

reposes; it is the temperment in being, in which the working life of the divine powers rests. (Gnad. iii,39)

These seven powers are essential and each one contains the patterns of the others within it. (Mysterium Magnum vi,24) All seven are thus found in all things. (Ibid., vii,68), even in ADONAI, the name of God (Theos. Frag., ii,10). Yet two dialectical properties constitute these Gestalten, a divine and an earthly one (Clav.), and they tend to make three principles. The first four Gestalten are the First Principle, of God in His wrath (Dreyfach. ii,40), never being able to achieve the 'light'. The first four are also the hellish principle within the world (Dreyfach., ii,50). The first three, considered from the point of view of the Third Principle constitute matter, as Sulphur, Mercury and Salt, or considered from the psychological point of view as Geist, Leibe, and Wesen. (Sig. Rer., ii,11: Gnad.,xiv, 10; Mysterium Magnum, iii,17). But with the fifth form the second principle becomes formed as love, as the revelation of the Father in His Son. (Gnad., iii,29). The sixth partakes of both aspects of the central fore, heat and light, and forms the basis of the divine names as well as the basis of magia, or the form-making power. (Theos. Frag., iii,31-34). The seventh form is essentiality, corporeality, and the ultimate glory of the redeemed being, living in the incorruptible flesh of Paul. It is 'the eternal Day' (Mysterium Magnum, xvi,23), the Kingdom of God (Mysterium Magnum, vi,7), the glossy sea (Dreyfach, v 10). It is that one far off divine event towards which all creation moves.

Here then is Jacob Boehme's life-cycle -- a cycle which

moves through the dialectical Gestalten to a form of being in which the limitations of the flesh have been overcome. These Gestalten are not static forms, like the Three Principles, but the dynamic life-process which culminates in the Kingdom of glory.

These are Boehme's spokes in the wheel of life, the links in his chain of being.

5. Angels

The seven natural powers (Gestalten) are Boehme's life cycle, his categories in the wheel of life, but the forces and shapes of the individual beings, of the eternal ideas, are ruled by the angels.

Boehme ascribes a peculiar rôle to the angels; and he conceives of them in primitive terms. Although he believed that angels had a beginning in the center of the Godhead, and although they were concomitant with the birth of the eternal beginning in the Trinitarian Godhead, still they are not that trinity. (Mysterium Magnum, viii,1). They exist only in two principles while man and his world participate in three. (Seel. Frag., 1,263,268; Menschw. I,iii,9) This world of three principles came to be only after one of the angelic princes, Lucifer, fell and by this fall brought the third principle of corporeality from potentiality into actuality. Angels are thus creatures like men but without man's corporeal body.

Angels are created out of the first principle (Princ. iv, 67), out of the matrix of light (Princ. v,24), out of the Limbo of God (Princ. ix,42), and out of the centrum of all essence. (Dreyfach., v,61).

They are of the essence of both the inner internal central fires. Their powers are the great emanating names of God. All have sprung from the Yes and have been led into the No, in order that powers might become manifest. And then there had to be an opposite in which

in which difference could exist. (Theos. Frag., iv,14)
 Since angels are made from two principles they possess
 only one centrum. (Theos. Frag., iii,21). They are the formed
 powers of God's word, his out-speaking (Theos. Frag. v,21),
 his thoughts (Theos. Frag. vi,5), and they are the centralizing
 of the seven natural powers. (Gnad., iv,23)

What is the angelic form?

As man is created to be the image and similitude of
 God, so also are the angels, for they are the brethern
 of men. (Aurora, v,2)

They have human forms, for

every angel is created in the seventh quality of
 fountain spirit, which is nature, out of which his body
 is compacted or incorporated together...for the body
 is the incorporated or compacted spirit of nature, and
 encompasses or encloses the six other spirits; these
 generate themselves in the body, just as in the Deity.
 (Aurora, xiii,33,35)

Angels have hands and feet, just like men, (Aurora xii,78,83)
 they have mouths and an aperture through which they breathe
 (Aurora, vi,10), but they have neither teeth nor wings (Aurora
 vi,17; xii,84) nor do they have limbs (Aurora, vi,12). Their
 nourishment consists of paradisiacal fruits (Aurora vi,17)
 and they eat of the divine power (Princ., iv,68), of the
Verbo Domini (Princ., iv,5), or of the love-essence. (Menschw.
 I,ii,6).

The angels are God's helpers in His dominion over the
 world:

Now as a man with his thoughts rules the world and
 all beings, so God or the eternal unity rules all things
 through the functions of the angels. The power and the
 working alone is God's, but they are His instruments

whereby he disports and moves himself, and by and through which he reveals the eternal powers and wonders. (Theos. Frag., vi,7)

The angels are God's wonder-workers, the fashioners and shapers of his powers of all His holy names:

For what the angels will and desire is by their imagination brought into shape and forms, which forms are pure ideas. In manner as the Divine powers have shaped themselves into such ideas before the creation of the angels, so is their after modeling.

The angels are not all equal in rank, even though they number a thousand times ten thousand. (Princ., xv,3). There are three realms of angels, ranged into seven dominions:

there are seven high dominions in three heirarchies, according to the fountain of the seven properties of nature. Every form of the Eternal Nature has immassed itself into a throne, as for a dominion, wherein distinctions are understood as well as the will to obedience to the holder of the throne. This dominion they have under their administration, as creatures of divine endowments, God having given them for a possession the sphere...wherein they dwell. (Gnad., iv,24-25)

The thrones are like the great principles, in each principle there are seven princely rules, or heirarchies, which hold dominion over the various powers, the formed expressions of the divine will. (Gnad., iv,25) But being free angels have the possibility of falling from the high place where they exist. (Theos. Frag) They can change themselves into either one of the two principles at will, and, before Lucifer's fall, they also have the possibility of imagining themselves into the world of substantial reality.

Each of the three realms of angels is ruled by an angel*prince. These three princes are Lucifer, Mishaël, and Uriel. Of these, Lucifer was the most beautiful of all the

creatures in heaven (Aurora, xiii,4,31) and he rules over the second Kingdom. In these three thrones and kingdoms all the powers of the angels are vested. (Mysterium Magnum xxxix, 22).

For what angels will and desire is by their imagination brought into shape and forms, which forms are pure ideas. (Theos. Frag. iii,10)

But the angels, as such, do not fall. They humble themselves and bow eternally before the great majesty of God so that the Eternal No may not get the dominion over them.

The angels, grounded in the thrones and powers of God, are the ministers of God's power:

For from the powers, as from the holy emanating names of God, or from the eternal unity, the idea sprang. But there are distinctions and dominions among them. Though they are all ministers of God, yet every throne has its offices and legions with special names, in accordance with the same thrones and powers. Hence there are among them prince-angels, according to the character of each throne. According to what kind of power the throne has, so has the prince-angel. The others are ministers, not servants. (Theos. Frag., v,11-12)

The Prince angel Lucifer was the Lord of the whole world of the second principle (Mysterium Magnum, ix,23) and it was his altercation which brought the real world of creatures into existence.

6. The Three Principles: Eternal Modes

Behind Jacob Boehme's doctrine of the seven natural powers and his angelology there lies the essentially dialectical doctrine of the three principles.

Now, what is a Principle?

A principle is an abstraction, and one can speak of a principle only in terms of Vernunft -- discursive reason -- and in terms of partial, abstracted knowledge. A principle does not appear to Verstand, to the intuitive understanding of the total unity. Boehme's doctrine of the three principles is thus not true to life for it lies beyond the cyclic movement of the seven principles.

In Boehme's view a principle is a life (Princ., v, 9), that is, an existence that has become what it was not, a thing which has sprung from nothing. (Menschw., v, 9). For when life and movement appear where previously none had existed, there is a principle. (Theos. Punkt, ii, 1). A principle has but one spirit which is its central life, and it has but one will. (Seel. Frag., i, 30).

A principle is a peculiar life, and has its center to nature. And therefore we call it a principle because there is total dominion in it, as there is in eternity; which dominion desires nothing more nor higher, but only that which may be generated in its own center; as you may perceive it by the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Kingdom of hell; for the Kingdom of Heaven desires nothing but the divine being; but hell that which is wrathful, murderous, fiery, sour, astringent. (Dreyfach., viii, 32)

The three principles Boehme saw in all reality, for he said that when he wrote of the three principles he understood three worlds. (II. Tilke, 40). And these three worlds constitute the threefold emanation of divine being, deriving from three sources:

God is the essence of all essences, wherein there are two essences in one, without end, and without original: viz., the eternal light, that is, God or the good; and then the eternal darkness, that is, the source; and yet there would be no source in it if the light were not. The light causes that the darkness longs for the light, and this anguish is the source of the wrath of God wherein the devils dwell; from whence God also calls Himself an angry, jealous God. These are the two principles, the original of which we know nothing of, only we know the birth, the indissoluble bond. (Princ., ix,30)

From these two a third is produced:

These are all three of them none else than the One God in His wonderful works, who has manifested Himself by this world according to the property of his nature. We are thus to understand a threefold Being, or three worlds in one another. (Theos. Punkt., ii,32.)

Each one of the three principles contests for the domination of man's image.

Boehme's doctrine of the three principles represents a projection of his trinitarian ideas into chemistry and into psychology, for he gives substantial and personal qualities to these principles. He allows no division into categories other than those allowed by this trinitarian scheme. The following table, while not comprehensive, illustrates the relationship between the principles and the trinity, between the chemical and the psychological structures in man's nature (Dreyfach, ix, 16,17):

First Principle	Father	Body	Salt
Second Principle	Son	Soul	Mercury
Third Principle	Spirit	Spirit	Sulphur

These three principles are produced from the theogonic activity of God:

There arise in the Being of all beings three Principles, that is, three kinds of life of three distinctions of divine revelation, whereof always one is the cause of the other. (Gnad., vi,6)

There is thus dialectical correlativeness between the three principles. The first one arises as

a hellish, wrathful source, being as another principle, or as a beginning or another property, which source is wholly rough, like the cold or hard stones, a mind which is horrible, like the fire-blaze. (Mysterium Magnum, ix,16)

It originates in desire, in the fire-root which is the center of nature (Gnad., iv,8) forming the Kingdom of darkness.

Harshness, bitterness, and fire, are in the originalness, in the first principle. The water-source is generated therein; and God is not called God according to the first principle; but according to the first principle He is called wrathfulness, angriness, the earnest source; from which evil, and also woeful tormenting, trembling, and burning, have their original. (Princ., i,8)

This is difficult. The distinction between this first principle, which is like God the Father (Princ., iv,44) and yet is not God because it is the source of evil is a hard one to make. Boehme conceived of evil as something more than ethical wrongdoing; he thought of it as unyielding, hard, recalcitrant quality in the world:

For the hardness is as hard as a stone, and the bitterness rushes and rages like a breaking wheel, which breaks the hardness, and stirs up the fire, so that all falls to be a terrible crack or fire, and flies up. (Princ., ii,9)

This first principle originates in the self-seeking desire of the Ungrund, the tendency to draw within, to consider the self in terms of self. When Boehme speaks of 'hardness' he is thinking of spiritual hardness, pride, and that stone-like aspect of the spirit which is unyielding and self-assertive, a congealed spirit-mass. All of the adjectives which he uses to describe this first principle must be considered as qualifying a spiritual being, not merely in the substantial meanings that they seem to suggest:

The first principle is wrathful, severe, sour, bitter, cold, and fiery, and is the impelling spirit in the wrath. (Menschw., I,1,13)

It is generated in desire, in the will. Hence its craving and contra-will to bring forth is also anguish. (Theos. Punkt, ii,41-42)

These are spiritual traits, for how could a principle be cold and fiery at the same time? Boehme's mind is thinking in pictures and the pictures are spiritual qualities described in physical terms.

Thus each principle has its growth from itself, and that must be, else all were a nothing. The principle of fire is the root, and it grows in its root. It has in its proprium sour, bitter, fierceness, and anguish; and these grow in its proprium in poison and death into the anguishful stern life which in itself gives darkness, owing to the drawing in of the harshness. (^)

This drawing in is psychological, a sich-in-sich-selbst-fassen, a spiritual tendency which is really the first principle.

The second principle, on the contrary, is the out-going, the sich-aus-sich-selbst-fassen. It originates out of the anguish produced in the first principle, because the properties of the first principle cannot endure, or stand, themselves.

They produce anguish because the qualities of the first principle cannot stand themselves. Left to their own resources they would consume themselves. This is the profound insight which Boehme brought to his dialectical ideas -- that spiritual hardness leads to death.

In the first principle...is harshness, bitterness, and fire; and yet they are not three things, but only one thing, and they generate one another...and then there is a horrible anguish, which finds no rest; and the birth is like a turning wheel, twitching so very hard, and breaking or bruising it as it were furiously, which the harshness cannot endure...and all that riseth up is the second principle; for the whole begetting or generating falls into a glorious love; for the harshness now loves the light, because it is so refreshing, cheerly, and beautiful, for from this pleasant refreshing it becomes thus sweet, courteous, and humble; and the bitterness now loves the harshness, because it is more dark. (Princ., iv,49)

Here is the catastrophe of self-salvation. The first principle, as man's drawing in and his self-assertiveness, as his attempt to save himself, leads only to the death of that self which he is seeking to save. Of itself the first principle cannot lead anywhere but to death.

The property of the second principle is light, and light is gentleness. (Menschw., II,v,2) Light or the second principle originates in the separation of the fire. (Gnad., iv,9) From this fire it passes into nature and being.

He, the Father, generates the second principle in and from the other will to the Word, in that He desires the manifestation of the Word in the Light of majesty. Thus the fire of the second principle in the Light of the majesty is a satisfying or an appeasing of the first will; namely, the gentleness, which is opposed to the fire of the first principle, and quenches its fierce wrath, and brings it into an essential substance as into an eternal life. (Theos. Punkt., i,33)

The second principle is noumenal, incomprehensible to all things:

Thus, we may know that God is all in all, and fills all, as it is written, Am I not I he that filleth all things? And therefore we know, that the holy pure element in paradise is His dwelling, which is the second principle, and is in all things, and yet the thing knows it not, as the pot knows not the potter, so also that neither comprehends nor apprehends the second principle. For I cannot say (when I take hold of, or comprehend anything, that I take hold of the Holy Element, together with the paradise of the Deity, but I comprehend the out-birth, the Kingdom of this world, viz., the third principle and the substance thereof, and I move not the Deity therewith. And so we are to know that the holy new man is thus hidden in the old, and not separated, but in the temporal death. (

Thus the second principle cannot be completely identified with the Logos, i. e., with the principle of rationality because there is here an ineffable aspect too. Boehme maintains this irrational aspect of the Logos in order to safeguard his soteriological principle which stated that only the enlightened soul, the newly born being, can really see into the full depths of the second principle. Boehme's epistemology equated faith and knowledge. Only the believer could know through his self-surrender; in an interesting, but lengthy passage Boehme describes the knowledge of the second principle that comes in the new birth. (Princ., ii,3)

The third principle is the world of substance and of reality, the world of men and of things and substances. (Princ. vii) It originates out of the first two principles and is this world of the four elements. (Princ., vii,3)

For the four elements are in a Principle of another property, and have another light, viz., the sun. But in the pure element the things of this world are only as a figure, which is not palpable. (Dreyfach., vi,116)

Together the first two principles created this third world, which originally stood in unity and harmony, as the dwelling place of the angels. Then Lucifer fell.

The third principle comes from the power of the essences, and has its beginning from the power of fire and light, from the fiery outbreathing of fire and light into a form, which is the Mysterium Magnum wherein all things lie; and yet this form is not an image, but an ens. It is the spiritus mundi, which the fiery life in the hungry desire seizes, and brings into a separation of working powers, and takes form itself therein. That is, the fire-life seizes the given substance of the light, and it draws itself up into a form; as is to be seen for a seed, and also in the four elements, which are all only a corpus of the spiritus mundi. And it is to be understood that the Mysterium Magnum is in itself good, and no trace of evil is to be found in it; but in its process of unfolding, since it is carried to divisibility, it becomes a contrarium of qualities, in which one overpowers the other and rejects it from fellowship. (Gnad. viii,7-8)

This great mystery has been created out of the wisdom of God, and in this mystery the spirit of God has seen the form of the creatures. (Menschw., I,1,12) God created, or generated, this third principle so that

He might be manifested by the material world. He having created the angels and spirits in the second principle in the Paradisical world, they could thereby understand the eternal birth in the third principle, also the wisdom and omnipotence of God, wherein they could behold themselves, and set their imagination merely upon the heart of God. (Princ., v,16)

The angels were in dominion over this world, which is the world God had created in seven days, as recorded in Genesis.

(Gnad., iv,10) This third principle is in a state of growth,

and therein were generated and created from what is inward the stars and elements, which in this place together with the sun are called the third principle. For the two inward worlds, viz., the fire-world and light-world, have manifested themselves by the third principle: and all

is mixed together, good and evil, love and enmity, life and death. In every life there is death and fire; also, contrariwise, a desire of love, all according to the property of the internal world. And two kinds of fruit grow therefrom, evil and good: and each fruit has both properties. They show themselves, moreover, in every life in this world, so that wrath and the evil quality are always fighting against love, each property seeking and bearing fruit. What the good makes, that the evil destroys and what the evil makes, that the good destroys. It is perpetual war and contention, for the properties of both the inward principles are active externally; each bears and produces fruit to the eternal kingdom, each will be lord. Cold, as the issue from the inward center, from the fierceness of death, will be Lord, and be continually shutting up death; it always awakens the sting of death. And heat, as the issue from the right fire, will also be lord; it would subdue and consume all, and will always be crude or unfashioned, without a body. It is a spirit, and desires only a spirit life. It gives sting to the cold, for often it kills it, so that it must forgo its right and surrender itself to the heat. In the same way the sun, or light, will also have reason to be lord. It overcomes heat and cold, for it makes in its lucid gentleness water, and introduces in the light's spirit a friendly spirit, viz., the air. It is indeed one, but has two properties, one according to the fire as a terrible uplifting, and one according to the light, as a gentle fire. The external principle is thus a perpetual war and contention, a building and a breaking; what the sun or the light builds, that the cold destroys, and the fire consumes it entirely. In this struggle its growth rises in mere combat and disunion; the one draws out of the earth its fruitfulness, the other destroys and swallows it up again. In all animals it causes malice and strife; for all animals and all the life of this world, except man, is only a fruit of the third principle and possesses only the life of the third principle, both units spirit and body are only this. And all that moves in the world, and man by his spirit and visible body in flesh and blood, is only the fruit of this same essence, and nothing else at all. (Theos. Punkt., iii, 48-53)

7. The Dialectical Problem

The real difficulty in comprehending Boehme's doctrine lies in the fact that it really is not a doctrine, but a dynamic vision of the world. He saw that the world moves by opposition, that it exists because of this opposition, and he believed that only by the surrendered, humble intuitive understanding (Verstand) could one know the real nature of the universe. Discursive reason (Vernunft), in so far as it was self-assertive and arrogant, could not enter in upon a knowledge of reality because Vernunft sought to resolve all antinomies and to solve all paradoxes. Boehme's metaphysical insight was founded upon his intuitive understanding that life is the greatest of paradoxes. His logic and his metaphysics moved by the opposition of contrasts. Geist and Natur, Licht and Finsterniss, Jah and Nein -- these polarities oppose each other and by their opposition mutually define and condition one another, making existence possible. Thus the world of essence -- of pure principles -- does not exist in an actual sense for existence is composed of forms, or Gestalten, which, while they do tend towards the purity of one or another of the principles, exist simply because that tendency is opposed by another force. Thus the static Principles are nothing else than tendencies, or abstract categories, which by their opposition produce the world of Gestalten, of patterned beings. Existential reality is constituted by the opposition of these static polarities: In Jah and Nein bestehen alle Dinge. Af -

firmation and negation imply each other, necessitate each other, 'bear' each other.

If this insight is the result of Boehme's mystical vision, then his vision was not static, like that of Plotinus or of Nicolas of Cusa, but dynamic and thoroughly dialectical: the Yes is a powerful and real affirmation, while the No is a suppression and a destruction. Thus, Yes and No are qualitative characters and forces and not quantitative substances like the being and non-being of the Greeks. All forms, patterns, Gestalten, arise as the result of the conditioning nature of the Yes and the No, the fruit of the productive dialectic of Jah and Nein. Even in God Himself there is Yes and No, although from the creature's point of view, the No in God, being His self-consciousness or wrath, cannot be God. God is only God to the creature in His Light and Love. (Theos. Frag., ii, 12ff.) There are then two modes of God: God the outgoing who seeks to manifest himself in and be known by the creature; and God the ingoing who seeks to know His own self, i. e., be self-conscious.

For the God of the holy world, and the God of the dark world, are not two Gods; there is but one only God; he Himself is all being, essence or substance; he is evil and good, heaven and hell, light and darkness, eternity and time, beginning and end. Where His Love is hid in anything, there His anger is manifest. In many a thing love and anger are in equal measure and weight; as it to be understood in this outward world's essence, being or substance. But now he is only called a God according to His light and love, and not according to the darkness, also not according to the outward world. Albeit he himself is ALL, yet we must consider the degrees how one thing mutually proceeds from another. For I can neither say of heaven nor of darkness, nor of this outward world, that they are God; none of them are God; but (they are) the expressed and formed WORD of God (Mysterium

Magnum, viii, 24-25)

In this theology of the Word God is seen as manifesting himself, but even He cannot manifest Himself without a Contrarium. The manifested world, the Word, is begotten of a tension between this manifestation and the ingoing, or the self-comprehending 'wrathful' nature of God.

The Word desires nothing more than to manifest its holy power through the separability; and in the Word the Deity becomes manifest in the separability by fire and light. And these two, viz., the Word and the Mysterium Magnum, are in one another as soul and body, for Mysterium Magnum is the being of the Word, in and through which the invisible God in His Trinity is made manifest, and is revealed from eternity to eternity. For of whatever the Word is in power and sound, of that is Mysterium Magnum a being; it is the essential Word of God. (Gnad., viii, 22)

The law of dialectics, holding that one thing implies another, that being is manifested by opposition, is the central doctrine of Boehme's metaphysics. It is also the heart of his trinitarian speculation, for he does associate trinity and metaphysical trichotomy. In his Theology of the manifested Word Boehme has comprehended the union of metaphysics and trinitarian speculation. Koyré has suggested that there are four distinct stages in the speaking of the Word: 1) the unexpressed Word, unconscious of self; 2) the act of speaking, or the expression and manifestation; 3) the meaning of that which is spoken; and 4) the spoken word in which the sense is incarnated. There is thus a distinction between the word speaking and the word spoken. The latter is the Gegenwurf

1. Koyré, op. cit., pp. 397-398

1

(objectum) of the former.

This is but another description of Boehme's central problem of spirit becoming flesh. There are here also four stages: 1) the chaotic, unformed source, God the hidden and unknowable; 2) the act of manifestation in form or body, i. e., the incarnated Son; 3) the self-consciousness of the Incarnated (Spirit); 4) the totality of the manifested being (Sophie) and the objectum. This is clear from the following:

The same will is the eternal beginning of the divine wisdom, i. e., of the intuition of the unground, and is likewise the beginning of the Word, viz., of the speaking forth of fire and of light. The speaking, however, does not take place in the will of the Unground, but in the comprehension of the scientia (power), where this will comprehends itself in the place of God, in the triad of the engenderment. There the Word of power speaks itself forth into a distinctiveness of the power; and in this distinctiveness of the forth-speaking power in the image of God, viz., man, has been seen from Eternity in the divine power and wisdom, in a magical form, without creaturely being. And in this seen image the Spirit of God has loved himself in the highest love, which is the name Jesus. (Gnad., vii,28)

Yet even here the law of dialectics operates,

because God's love would not have been manifest without the eternal nature, that is, because the fire of love would not have been manifest without the fire of wrath, therefore the wrath-fire in its ground of nature was the root, and the love-fire was the manifestation of the wrath fire, in manner as light comes from fire. (Gnad., vii,29)²

Boehme's trinitarian structure dominates his metaphysics because the same problem is involved in both. His doctrine of the trinity was but half of his idea of God, for if God is threefold in person, if there is in him a

1. Koyré: op. cit., p. 398.

2. Boehme's three images -- fire, light, word -- are seeking to express the same thing.

trinity then there must also be unshatterable unity. Unity is transcendence -- a unity above the created world and in which the created world cannot share. God's unity behind his trinity is not a part of the world and if there is any correspondence between creator and creature it must therefore be on the basis of the three principles -- of trinity -- rather than upon the idea of unity. Boehme thus takes the idea of threefoldness in God seriously; but he also limits it. There can be no unity in being simply because being proceeds from the trinity of God and does not partake of His unity. The created world cannot share in the divine unity but only through the correspondence of the three principles to the three persons can correlation be.

We Christians say that God is threefold, but only one in essence. But that we generally say and hold that God is threefold in person, the same is very wrongfully apprehended and understood by the ignorant yea, by a great part of the learned...he is threefold in his eternal generation. He begets Himself in Trinity; and yet there is but one essence and generation to be understood in this eternal generation, neither Father, Son, nor spirit, but the one eternal life, or God. (Mysterium Magnum, vii,5,11,2)

It became increasing~~/~~ difficult for Boehme to hold to his doctrine of the three persons because God tended to remain personal only in Christ. (God is no person save only in Christ' (Mysterium Magnum vii,5)). This is not a denial of the Trinity of persons for it involves Boehme's peculiar view of personality as comprehensibility (Fasslichkeit). And the unity behind this Trinity is Boehme's God outside of nature and creature.

Here then is Boehme's trinitarian eternal nature -- a world of dialectical tension between great forces. It is manifested being, neither the hidden, unitary life of God nor the world we know, the world of process, struggle, and change. It is Boehme's eternal universe.